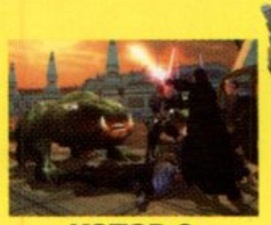
MASSIVE! **2005 PREVIEW**

BLACK & WHITE 2



KOTOR 2

QUAKE IV

BATTLEFIELD 2

BROTHERS IN

FREE HALF-LIFE 2 BOOK!

PC GAMES

THE HALF-LIFE 2 KILLER!

S.T.A.L.K.E.R.

Exclusive 6-page exposé of 2005's best shooter

PCGA Awards 2004 The best of the best!

FRONTLINE REPORT!

ACT OF WAR

CNN meets C&C in this RTS revolution

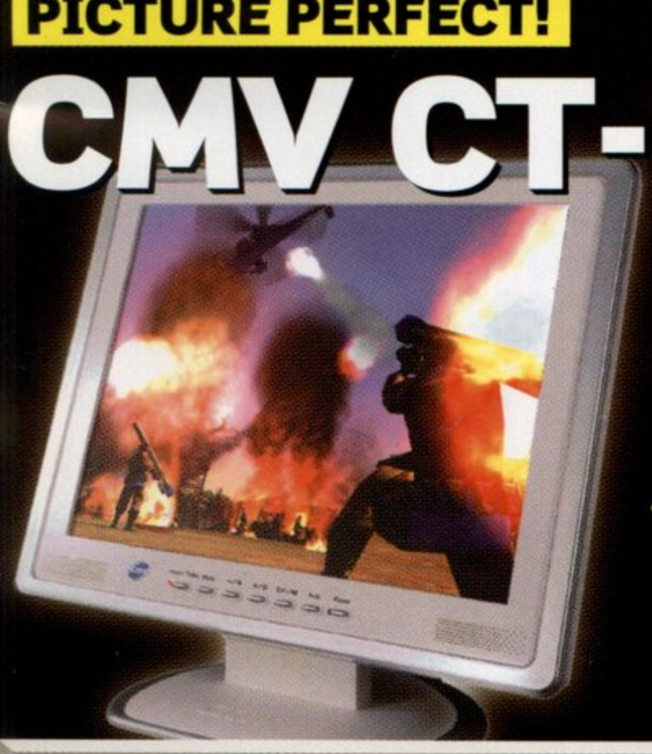
RATED & REVIEWED!

CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK

The FPS Doom 3 should have been?

PICTURE PERFECT!

CMV CT-720D



The 17-inch LCD monitor that's geared for gaming on the go!

FULL REVIEW!

VAMPIRE BLOODLINES

The dark action-RPG with serious bite!

SUPER SCOOPER!
THE LATEST ON...

CIVILIZATION IV
STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR
WOW: BATTLEGROUNDS
DRAGONSHARD
DARWINIA
GTA: SAN ANDREAS
AND MORE!

EXTRA-LIFE

FEATURING Rollercoaster Tycoon 3 D-I-Y lesson › **Holo-dek gaming** Counter-Strike Source Machinima › **Fragdolls: Girl gamers?** › More!

ISSUE 30 MARCH 2005
AUS $10.95 NZ $13.95 (INC GST)
PRINT POST APPROVED PP255003/06201
DERWENT HOWARD
9 771447 047019 30

SUBSCRIBE & CHOOSE YOUR FREE GAME! DETAILS PAGE 50

M15+
MEDIUM LEVEL
ANIMATED VIOLENCE

PC GAME

DVD ROM EDITION
ALSO AVAILABLE

BINK VIDEO

dice

PLAYS BEST ON ALIENWARE™

The way it's meant to be played
NVIDIA

TRUE FRIENDSHIP IS NEVER HAVING TO SAY, "SORRY I LAUNCHED THOSE SIDEWINDER MISSILES AT YOU."

BATTLEFIELD 2™

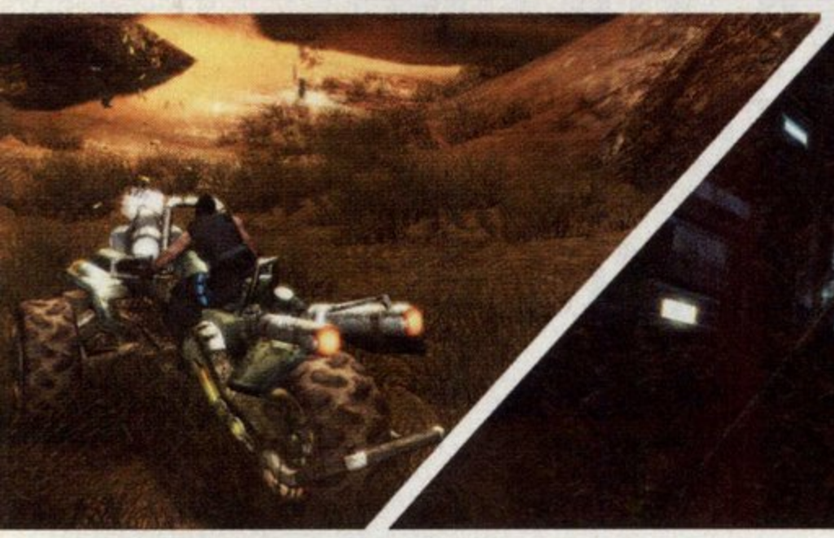
ENGAGE NOW AT BATTLEFIELD2.EA.COM

© 2004 Digital Illusions CE AB. All rights reserved. Battlefield 2 is a trademark of Digital Illusions CE AB. Electronic Arts, EA, EA GAMES, the EA GAMES logo and "Challenge Everything" are trademarks, or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Gamespy and the "Powered by Gamespy" design are trademarks of Gamespy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. The Way It's Meant to be Played Logo and other NVIDIA Marks are trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. Alienware and the Alienware logo are registered trademarks and trademarks of Alienware Corporation. All rights reserved. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. EA GAMES™ is an Electronic Arts™ brand. E6812A

EA GAMES™

Challenge Everything™

FROM THE CREATORS OF



$10 OFF* WHEN YOU PRE-ORDER PARIAH ON PC AT

EB GAMES electronics boutique

*Offer requires a minimum $10 pre-order deposit. Limited time only.

UNREAL

UPGRADABLE WEAPONS // STUNNING PHYSICS ENGINE AND VISUALS
INTENSE MULTIPLAYER ACTION // COOPERATIVE MODE // MAP (MAKE & PLAY) EDITOR

COMING MARCH 2005

SEE IT. WWW.PARIAHGAME.COM

PARIAH™

CAN YOU SURVIVE?

CGA TAT TGA

HIP GAMES

groove

DIGITAL EXTREMES

PlayStation.2

XBOX

XBOX LIVE

PC CD ROM

MA15+

© Hip Interactive Europe © 2004 Groove Games. All rights reserved. Pariah™ and the Digital Extremes logo are the trademarks of Digital Extremes. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live, and the Xbox and Xbox Live logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Unreal® is a registered trademark of Epic Games, Inc. Unreal® Engine, copyright 1998 - 2004, Epic Games, Inc. All rights reserved. Pariah™ is being published and distributed in Europe exclusively by Hip Interactive Europe.

PC GAMES ADDICT

AUSTRALIA'S BEST PC GAMES MAGAZINE

THE PC GAMES ADDICT TEAM
Editor ..... Dan Toose
Managing Editor ..... Kevin Cheung
Associate Editor ..... Mark Donald
Associate Editor ..... Ross Atherton
Disc Editor ..... Dan Toose
Art Director ..... Paul Cook
Associate Art Editor ..... Mark Wynne
Designer ..... Amanda Neal
Hardware Editor ..... Asher Moses

CONTRIBUTORS & FRIENDS
Mark Sutherns, Michelle Starr, James Cottee, Tony Ellis, Eliot Fish, Kieron Gillen, John Hicks, Steven Willis, Tim Stone, John Walker, Richard Cobbett, Al Bickham, Jim Rossignol, James Carey, Michael Abolins, Iain McCafferty, Andy Lowe

PHOTOGRAPHY
Photography ..... Tim Levy
In-house images taken with the Nikon Coolpix 995, Nikon DX-1 and the odd snap with Dan's Canon G2 Powershot

PRODUCTION
Production Manager ..... Sue Wall

ADVERTISING
Advertising Manager ..... Sam Rochaix
sam@derwenthoward.com.au
Call: (02) 9386 4666

PUBLISHING
Publisher ..... Paul Hardy
Directors ..... Jim Flynn, Nathan Berkley
Creative Director ..... Simon Wan

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Call the Subscriptions Hotline on 136 116
Also see Page 50 for details

DISTRIBUTION by ndd
Printed in Australia by Webstar

© 2005 Derwent Howard Publishing, all rights reserved

Articles in this issue reproduced from PC Gamer are copyright or licensed by Future Publishing, a Future Network plc group company, UK 2005. All rights reserved.

This magazine is brought to you by Derwent Howard, the makers of Official PlayStation 2 Magazine-Australia, Official Australian Xbox Magazine, Australian Developer, Windows XP Magazine, What DVD, and T3.
derwenthoward.com.au

DERWENT HOWARD

This month, we've been...

SWEATING...
...in a small room for hours as we report on endemic developer exploitation in the industry.

SHOOTING...
...film, not firearms, though it'll be all guns blazing once Act of War arrives to challenge C&C.

LOOKING FORWARD...

....to 2005 which, we can tell you now, is going to be a very good year. We sniff the bouquet, admire the body and let you know what will be the pick of the bunch this year in PC gaming.

BLOODSUCKING...
...our way through Troika's horror RPG. Cross garlic off your shopping list and stalk this way.

HAVING A BLAST...
....with Worms Forts: Under Siege. Well we would, if we could still blow the world up.

What a hangover...

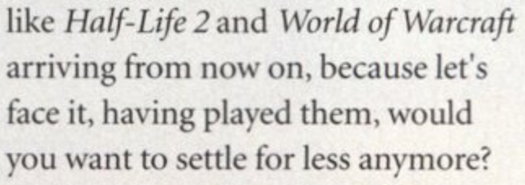
Waking up after the glut of outstanding games that arrived in the back half of 2004 to a new year in PC gaming feels rather akin to an actual 'post-bender' hangover. My mouth's dry, my eyes are shot, and I'm often unsure what day it is of late, but those are just the natural side effects of spending long hours glued to the screen neglecting my body clock, indulging in all that gaming ambrosia while it's fresh. Perhaps that's why I've felt the urge to game so hard now, because I know it could be some time before another 'party' like 2004 comes along.

This videogame hangover begs for the 'hair of the dog' approach to dealing with the pain...Get another fix of A-grade gaming *now!* It does raise the question though, 'How do you top a party like that?' What are developers going to have to do to meet gamers' expectations now?

I alluded to that last issue, and it's actually becoming a real issue for the industry. We all expect to see games like *Half-Life 2* and *World of Warcraft* arriving from now on, because let's face it, having played them, would you want to settle for less anymore?

At the Australian Game Developers Conference 2004, Jason Ruben of Naughty Dog projected that many next-gen console games will cost up to thirty million dollars to produce. It's all because more detailed graphics means hiring more artists.

Fortunately for us, it looks like the industry is already prepared to raise that bar to meet those lofty expectations. This issue's massive round-up of 2005's most promising games looks like anything but a step backwards for PC gaming.



DAN TOOSE
EDITOR

Send letters
PC Games Addict, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355

E-mail us
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

PCGA forums
http://forums.derwenthoward.com.au/
plus forums for other Derwent Howard mags

TrackMania®

sunRise

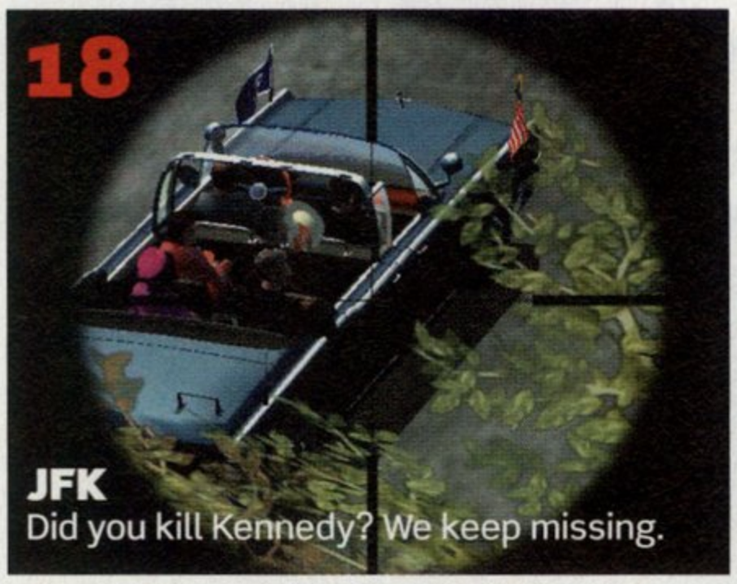
If you thought the original was insane....

Then hold onto your hats because you aint experienced anything YET!

Proudly Distributed by: QV Software International - 79 Silverwater Rd. Silverwater, NSW, 2128 - (02) 9748 2555 - www.qvsoftware.com.au

Issue 30 March 2005

PC GAMES ADDICT



CONTENTS

10 Eyewitness
Gaming announcements, industry gossip, expert opinions from experienced journalists and the latest idiotic thing John Romero said.

22 PCGA Awards 2004
It was arguably the best year in PC gaming ever, with more benchmark games arriving than we normally see in several years... So which were the best?

25 Previews - Special
2005 Previewed **25**, S.T.A.L.K.E.R. **42**, Act of War **48**

50 Subscribe
This month, all subscribers to PC Games Addict will receive their choice of Sonic Heroes or Football Manager 2005. Not convinced? How about you look at it like this... The game you choose essentialyl pays for the subscription itself. Save AND get a free game!

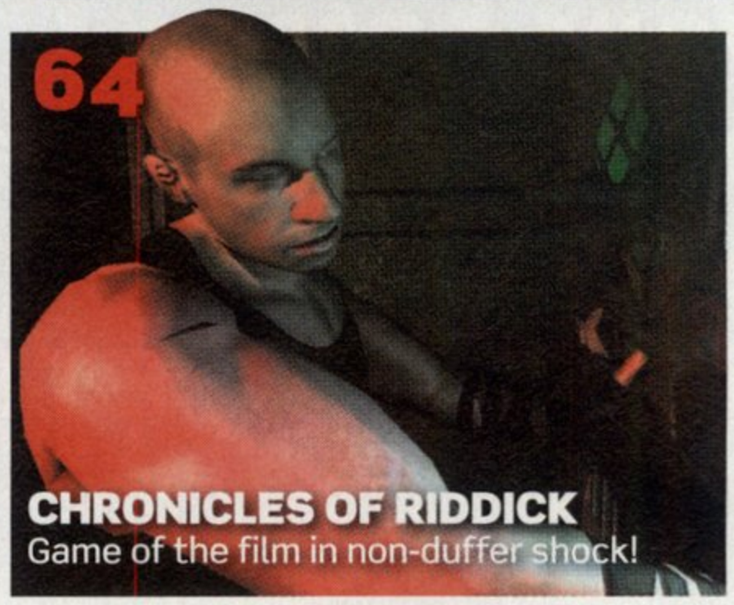
52 Gamer Snap
More puerile posing? Well, that's up to you. Those who can make it funny without bringing homosexuality into it tend to end up winning.

54 Uncensored
Reader reviews. Because your opinion is almost as valid as ours.

56 Cables
When reader mail attacks. Say something insightful and concise to score games...

59 Reviews

Alexander	67
Children of the Nile	60
Chronicles of Riddick	64
Eve: Exodus	67
Football Manager 2005	72
Madden NFL 2005	73
Pro Evolution Soccer 4	73
Settlers: Heritage of Kings	68
Vampire: Bloodlines	62
Worms Forts: Under Siege	66
Zoo Tycoon 2	70



74 Downloader
EXTRA-LIFE
Half-Life Zombie Panic **74**, Dulsya Isle **75**, Clan Wars Machinima **75**, Tin Man Squad **76**, Sigma Core **76**, Dice City **77**, Uplink Mods **77**

78 Mod News
Alien kiss-chase with Off Limits for Half-Life 2, standalone frag partying with Nexuiz and a Shogun mod for Rome: Total War.

80 D-I-Y
Get tinkering with Rollercoaster Tycoon 3, with our lesson from the actual creators of the game, Frontier Games.

82 Long Play
From the age of gore-filled run-and-gun FPS gaming came No One Lives Forever, the game that dared to enjoy playing with makeup.

84 Culture
Stories from the edge of gaming, including the Fragdoll girl gamers (or are they?), Holo-Dek 360° gaming, *World of Warcraft* bonding, the Masters of Machinima, and more.

86 Systems
Overclocking: risky hobby limited to anti-static bracelet-wearers? We smash that myth.

88 Money Pit
Thermaltake keep the classy cases coming, a new LCD monitor that refreshes fast enough to cut the mustard and all the latest hardware reviewed and rated.

94 Play Faster
Get the best view of Dawn of War, kickstart old classics on Windows XP and speed up your ride on Rollercoaster Tycoon 3.

96 On the Discs
A look at what's on the discs, without looking at them. Funny that.

98 Next Month
How things were looking before the hand of fate slapped us, for better or worse.

ON THE DISC PCGA is more than just a magazine. Articles sporting this sign are enhanced by extras on the disc.

ATI

RADEON

DESIGNED ON RADEON
BEST ON RADEON

HALF-LIFE 2

戰慄時空 2

ati.com

Sid Meier's Civilization 4

The Aztecs are invading Perth. Again

Where now for the post-*Rome Civilization*? What can the much-loved empire building series do to regain our hearts, after extended marches across the battlefields of the Mediterranean? Fresh from the success of *Pirates*! Sid Meier, the series creator has one idea at least: he's taking on the world.

In the forthcoming *Civilization 4*, Sid's studio, Firaxis, are already testing a multiplayer mode. You'll be able to rule the world, beginning with a starting tribe of cave-men and inbreds, taking them to the post-nuclear age and beyond, online. The plan is to cater for everyone's megalomaniacal desires, while fitting into their schedules. If you want a quick knock-about game of lunchtime genocide, then it should be a simple case of finding a friend, and making with the slaughter. Long-term campaigns lasting months are also possible. The mechanics of the game remain similar – it's still about ruling the world with an iron mouse-finger, making strategic long-term decisions via ye-olde turn-based rule-set. In this game the world is rendered in whizz-bang 3D, and you're able to zoom from a satellite's-eye view, right down into the heart of your cities. Crushing is no longer a matter of piling on with a group of over-powered tanks – the underlying maths that defines how battles are resolved is being tweaked to emphasise combined arms. Assaults on major cities will require aerial bombardment, followed by the soothing forces of infantry and armour.

That's the good news. Here comes the bad. The mean business of business may be getting in the way of us playing the game. According to financial disclosures made by Atari, the rights to the *Civilization* series have been sold on. Right now, the games publisher and backer are a mystery.

README

Publisher **TBA**
Developer **Firaxis**
ETA **Early 2006**

SAY *WHAT*?

The month in tongues

John Romero
"I've gone on record to say that I'm proud of the PC version of *Daikatana* and I stand behind that. It was not meant to be a beginner's FPS but rather an expert FPS that required more than just the player hopping around and thinking only of themselves like most other FPS's - Daikatana required you to also help your sidekicks survive the ordeal alongside you. This new play mechanic threw many people off the game because it was too difficult. But playing Daikatana again today, this is one fast and furious FPS...still."
The self-important game designer proves he's still got delusions of grandeur. Both unable to cut it without Carmack, and unable to do the respectable thing and admit his game sucked.

Empire at War

The Star Wars RTS we've always wanted?

The cat's out of the bag: developer Petroglyph's top-secret project has been revealed to be *Empire at War*, an RTS set in the Star Wars universe. The new game, set two years before the movie *Star Wars: A New Hope*, is slated for release in late 2005.

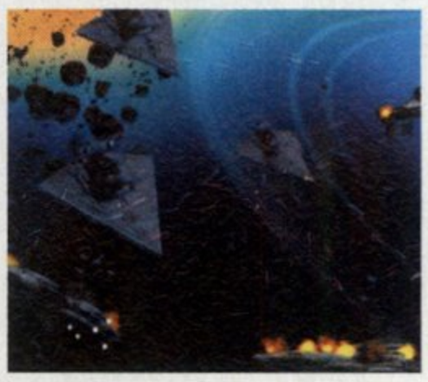
Information on the title is scant, and Petroglyph and Lucasarts seem to both be keeping things under very tight wraps, but what we do know is that there will be a little bit of story crossover with *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*, and that the combat itself will feature both ground and space battles.

For the ground battles, there will be a number of different terrains – screenshots show both desert and forest battles. There will also be some previously unseen artillery vehicles, including what is being called a TIE Crawler – sort of a cross between a TIE Fighter and a tank.

Speculation and rumour are rife. One thankful certainty; the game is *not* a sequel to Lucasarts' previous Star Wars RTS offering, *Galactic Battlegrounds*.

README

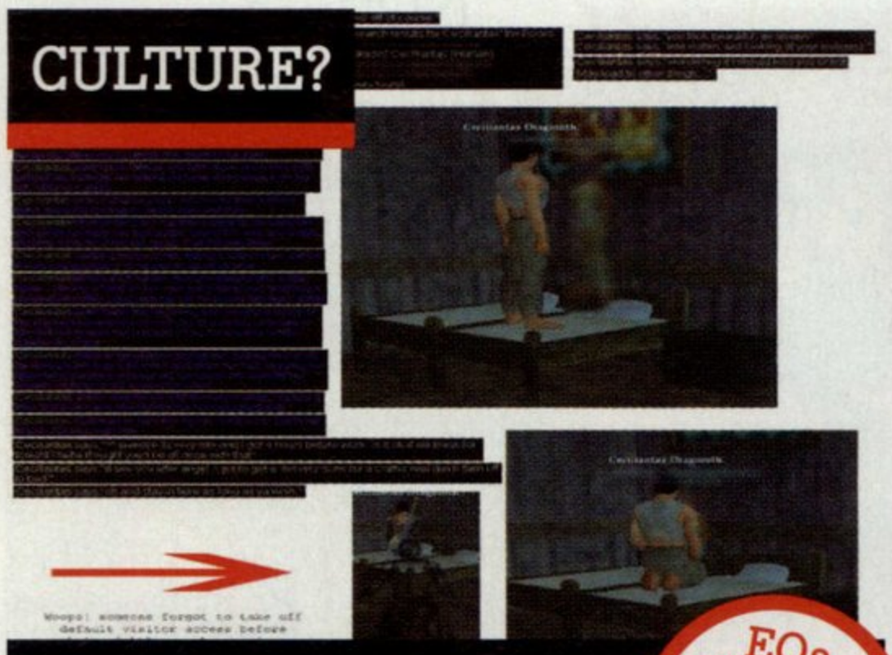
Publisher **LucasArts**
Developer **Petroglyph**
ETA **Late 2005**



gobbets

Money well spent›
Gamers are often fighting negative press that's trying to cast us as killers in the making. So it's only fair that Child's Play (www.childsplaycharity.org) gets a mention here. The charity, set up by www.penny-arcade.com, took in US$250,000 worth of donations for needy children last year. Why not make a donation?

The National Institute on Media and the Family has invented a new word to describe the violence in some videogames: Killographic.



Redefining Ownage...

Over the summer, a certain *EverQuest II* player achieved infamy. Ceciliantas, formerly of the guild The Dauntless, made the mistake of behaving like an ass to his Guildmates, and severely pissed off the guild leader, Enigma. It wouldn't have been the first time such a thing had occurred, but it so happened that Ceciliantas considered himself something of a ladies' man... Despite commonly being regarded as a prat in MMOG circles.

Cue diabolical revenge. It befell that a young lady (also of The Dauntless) was approached by our intrepid Don Juan, flirted with outrageously, and invited back to Ceciliantas' snazzy bachelor pad for a bit of private hot'n'heavy. There were, however, two things that Cec didn't realize: that the lovely Allannah was, in actuality, a guy, and that he was quite good friends with Enigma.

So, naturally, Allannah eventually accepted, but not before calling in another friend – the bard Surgat. Cec was so caught up in his new amour, you see, that he forgot to lock his door, and Surgat himself had the handy ability to turn invisible. And thus it turned out that the whole sordid encounter was duly screenshotted, and subsequently posted to the Permafrost forums. They errupted.

His in-game girlfriend Evenstar got wind of it, and disowned him on the forums...

If, at this point, Cec had laughed it off, that probably would have been the end of it. Instead, he got mighty upset, blustered loudly that it never happened, and claimed the screenshots were faked (which would have been extremely difficult to do), earning him a certain amount of notoriety. Naturally, his in-game girlfriend, Evenstar, got wind of it, and publicly disowned him on the forums. The killing blow, however, came when Ceciliantas started threatening legal action against both the forum owners and Enigma (known on the forum as Bobmarle). He was promptly informed that he didn't have a leg to stand on, since 1) the subject was a fictional game character, and 2) slander and/or libel must be proved to be a lie.

The whole fiasco got the poor chap laughed out of 'town', international fame, and his very own entry in UrbanDictionary.com.

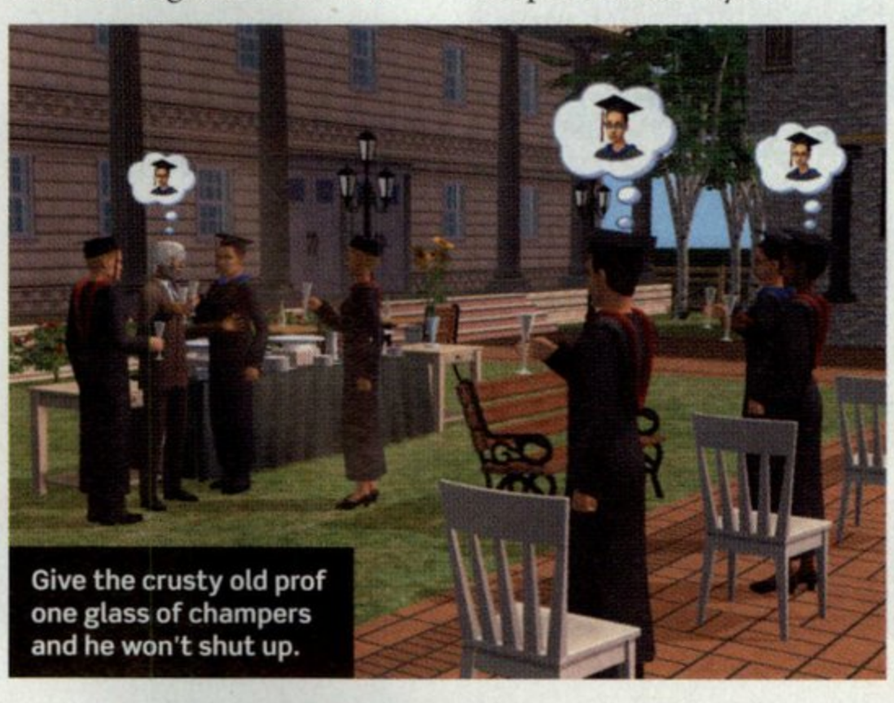
Pizza, pillow fights and parties. There's no studying going on here.

Sims 2 University

First class honours in bladder control

The first *Sims 2* expansion pack is already looming. Maxis announced they're releasing *Sims 2 University* early in 2005, a pack that throws our pixelated teens into campus life.

The wave of expansions for the original *Sims* will put many on guard, but *University* already sounds a cut above those efforts. Filling in the gap years when our Sims turn from teens to adult, we're warped into a new College town where we can waste the taxpayers' Simoleons in spectacular style.


Give the crusty old prof one glass of champers and he won't shut up.

An array of haunts including pool halls, gyms and coffee houses can play host to our high jinks while, back in the dorm we can bag the best room, but unfortunately, not our roommate. There's the option to indulge in all manner of US-style frat nonsense, including pledging your allegiance to a Greek house, giving you the right to boss around the freshers and kop off with cheerleaders no doubt. And at the end of it all, you'll get one of the 11 majors that in turn opens up one of four new career paths.

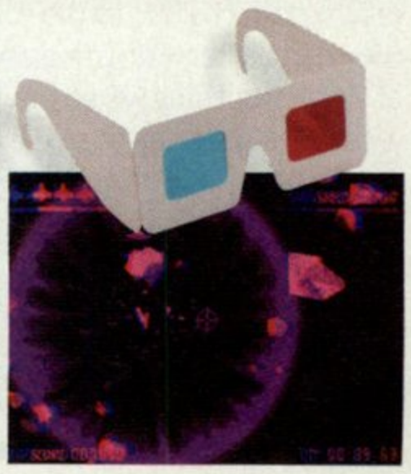
README

Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Maxis
ETA March 2005

gobbets

3D Asteroids ›

If you've got a pair of those old headache-inducing 3D specs, it's time to pull them out and head on over to www.clic.net/~poirb/ to download Stereo Space Combat – the Asteroids-style space shooter in retro 3D. There's also a normal version... just in case you can't find your glasses.



UPDATE

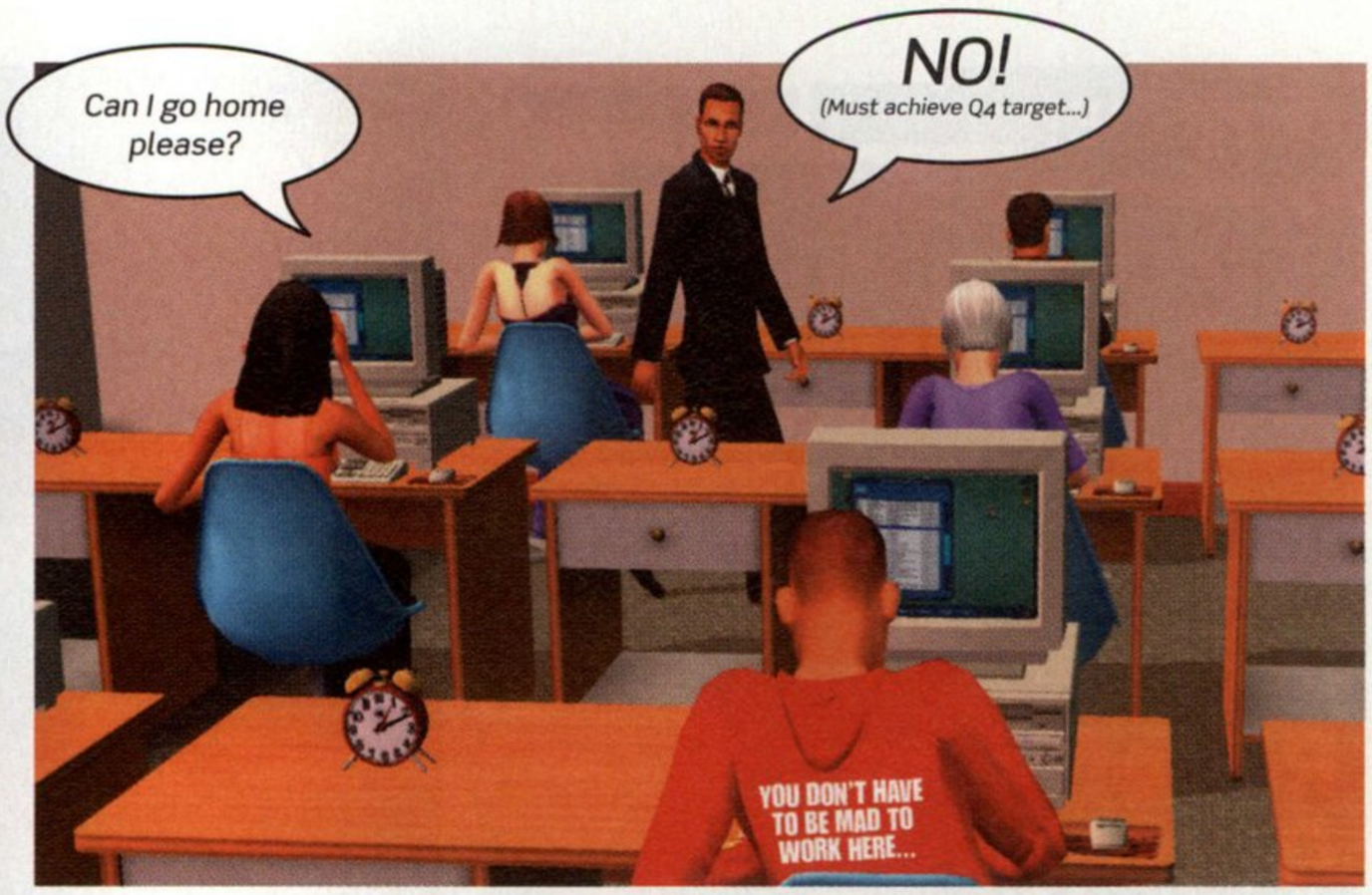
WoW: Battlegrounds

Blizzard has established *World of Warcraft* as the leading western MMORPG today, and that could partly come down to SOE's *EverQuest 2's* lack of PvP (Player vs. Player) gaming. However, that does not mean that *World of Warcraft's* PvP features were complete when the game went live. They were functional, and allowed players to get as much or little of PvP as they'd choose. This was key to making *WoW* a game for all comers, as PvP is a bit of a 'Love it or hate it' phenomenon. Despite being this accomidating, at present there's little incentive to actually go attacking the enemy. There's no XP or tangible rewards to make it worthwhile.

If you expected an expansion first, think again - Blizzard are making the first major update a freebie. The aptly named 'Battlegrounds' will add new zones to World of Warcraft that are geared for ongoing, progressive battles between the Horde and the Alliance - all the while adhering to the 'Play how you want' ethos of the game.

There's no looting fallen enemies of their hard earned equipment and savings, but victors will be able to take a sample of blood and an insignia from their victims. If enough blood can be amassed by each side, it can fuel uber-powerful spells for their NPC shaman to turn the tide of battle. Taking an insignia stops corpses being resurrected, forcing them to start from the nearest friendly graveyard. It's all about taking graveyards, and working to eventually take down the enemy general - even if that's by working as a non PvP player, tackling enemy NPCs and support quests to help the 'braver' comrades present.

At last, the 'War in an MMOG' may actually work.



Your dream job?

The making of videogames is not a glamourous business. It's damned hard work. It involves long hours as a matter of course, and then there's 'crunch time' – the two or three months prior to a game's release where everyone puts in stupidly extended hours (70-80 a week) in order to get it out.

This has been considered the norm in this industry, however, late last year developing giant EA came under fire when an anonymous spouse of an EA employee posted a blog essay on this particular phenomenon, complaining about the poor conditions employees have to work under, and how the whole thing is utterly life-destroying.

Also, as long as there are workers willing to put in the overtime in order to get their game as good as it can be and on the shelves, companies will take advantage of it. What these developing companies are doing is running a business, and as far as they're concerned, the final profit figures at the end of the day are the ones that matter. And there will always be developers willing to put in the hours – whether it be for pride in their product, wanting to get a foot in the industry door, or simple love of the job.

Be that as it may, there's no excuse for slave labour employment practices. But it's important to remember that joining a witch-hunt won't solve any problems. The EA Spouse may have raised a valid point, but it's just that: a valid point.

What she, and the rest of the western videogame development industry need to keep in mind is that establishing a union or such to protect the rights of the workers will result in dramatic increases in development costs. This in turn will result in more work being outsourced to Asia, where the labour is a tiny fraction of the cost, and is becoming increasingly more polished.

The crux - Ensuring western developers get certain rights may in turn ensure that they get less work as a matter of course. It's one of the biggest issues facing gaming today.

GfK THE PC TOP 10 CHART

A BRIEF BURST OF SANITY

No real shock that *The Sims 2* has resumed its position at the top of the charts after Half-Life 2 and World of Warcraft utterly wiped the floor with EA's big money-maker, even if it was just for a short while in the gap between issue 29 and this glorious collection of paper.

At least there's evidence that every gamer and their mouse still wants the two best games of 2004.

Even after *World of Warcraft* leaves the charts, it'll be living of it's fans.

POSITION	GAME	PUBLISHER
1 (1)	*The Sims 2*	EA
2 (2)	*The Sims: Deluxe*	EA
3 (NE)	*Half-Life 2*	Vivendi
4 (NE)	*World of Warcraft*	Vivendi
5 (3)	*The Sims: Unleashed*	EA
6 (NE)	*LOTR: Battle for Middle-Earth*	EA
7 (5)	*The Sims: Superstar*	EA
8 (4)	*The Sims: Makin' Magic*	EA
9 (NE)	*The Sims: Vacation*	EA
10 (NE)	*Need for Speed Underground 2*	EA

ASUS DVD Burners enable 16X Burning with 8X Discs

Although DVD burning technology has progressed to 16X, the supply of disc media supporting this new high-speed standard remains low. Even if you are one of the lucky few that is in possession of these expensive discs, you still have to worry about burning reliability unless you want a stack of overpriced coasters.

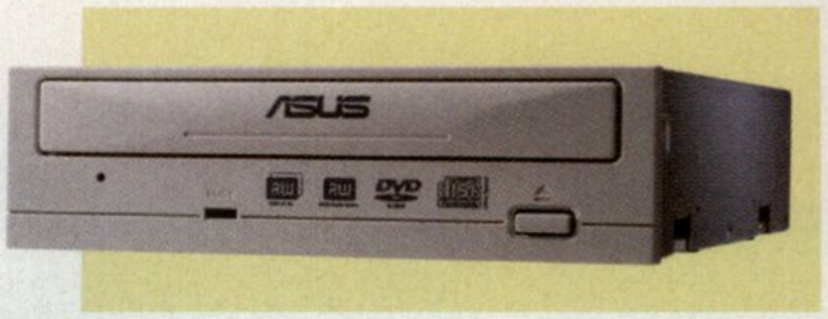
Optical drive makers, of course, won't let their technological advancements go to waste. Take ASUS for example, the company introduced an innovative feature called "Over-Speed Burning". This feature enables users to enjoy fast 16X burning with 8X discs, which are more readily available and more affordable. It's a cost-effective way to shorten burning time.

Double burning speed on dual-layer disks

Over-Speed Burning also supports double-layer discs, which offer large data capacity up to 8.5GB, roughly 2,000 MP3 songs. Most double-layer discs at the moment support 2.4X speed, meaning to burn a full disc takes approximately 40 to 50 minutes. 4X discs are available as well, but higher speed also comes with higher price. With Over-Speed Burning, you can burn an 8.5GB, 2.4X double-layer disc in only 26 minutes.

Disc quality detection for best burning speed

The advantages of Over-Speed Burning are pretty obvious. The one thing you need to pay special attention to is disc quality. Please make sure you purchase discs approved by the manufacturer of your drive. ASUS implement a mechanism for disc quality detection and intelligently adjust for the most suitable burning speeds to prevent poor quality and damaged discs.



In conclusion, if you know what to look for, enjoying the fastest burning speed doesn't necessarily have to mean emptying your wallet. DVD burners with Over Speed Burning are excellent solutions as the shortage of 16X and 4X dual-layer discs continue and these discs remain expensive.

Double layer burning comparison

Disc media	Burning speed	Burning time	Good	Bad
2.4X	2.4X	40-50 min	· Disc is easily attainable · Affordable	Long burning time
4X	4X	26 min	· Short burning time	Supply is low Very expensive
2.4X	Over Speed at 4X	26 min	· Disc is easily attainable · Affordable · Short burning time	High-quality discs needed

The Choice of Expert Gamers

ASUS Gamer Edition Cards Deliver Big Bang for the Buck

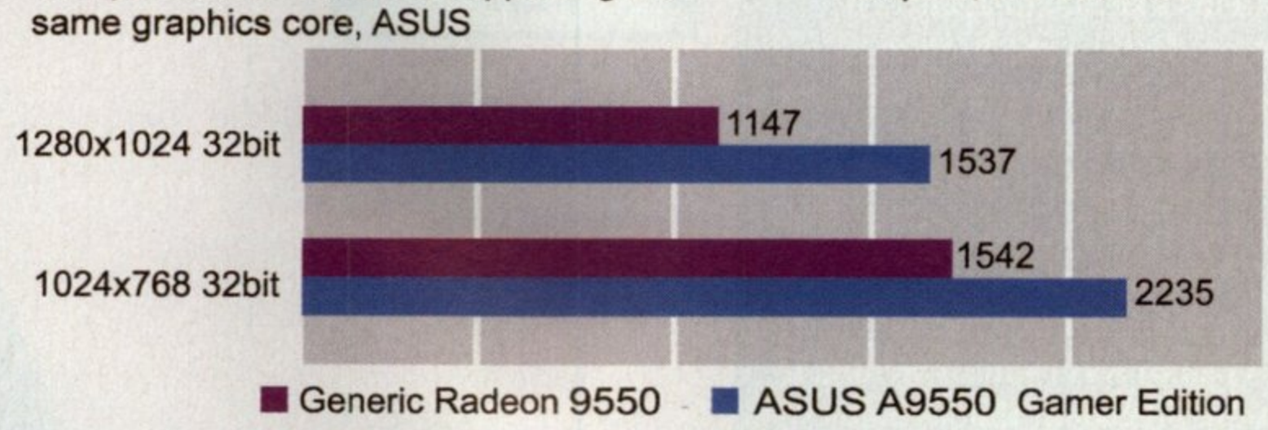
The launch of new titles such as Lineage II and Doom 3 should propel a wave of system upgrades among serious gamers, since more powerful video performance is needed to smoothly run the latest 3D games. Taking into account that many gamers probably don't have huge budgets to enhance their gaming systems, ASUS, a leading provider of graphics solutions, recently introduced special Gamer Edition video cards, which offer explosive graphics at affordable prices.

Improved circuitry and memory modules

Gamer Edition cards, as the name suggests, are specifically tailored towards keen gamers. Gamer Edition cards have redesigned circuit boards, upgraded memory specifications along with other extra features. Compared with solutions supporting the same graphics core, ASUS

Same performance using lower-end graphics core

It takes strong engineering to be able to redesign the reference card. The ASUS V9999 Gamer Edition runs on Nvidia's 6800 chipset, but the card's performance actually approaches those supporting the next-level chipset, the 6800GT.



3D Mark 2003

Gamer Edition cards deliver superior video performance.

For example, the ASUS A9550 Gamer Edition (supporting ATI's Radeon 9550 chipset) provides a 25% performance increase compared with typical Radeon 9550-based graphics cards. And the ASUS V9250 Gamer Edition (supporting Nvidia's FX5200 chipset) is 50% more powerful than other FX5200 solutions.

With higher-end memory, the prices of Gamer Edition cards are slightly higher than solutions using the same graphics core, but enable far better video capability. ASUS Gamer Edition is currently the choice of many gaming experts and users who demand top-of-the-line visual effects. Give a little more and you'll get back so much more.

Devil's Advocate

You may hate it, but Steam could wind up driving independent game development.

DAN TOOSE
...has spent the last decade of his life dealing with game developers and publishers, and ultimately just wants everyone to get along so they can make the best games possible. That, and one or the other would lynch him if he took a side...

This whole Valve thing has raised enough issues that it's a Devil's Advocate dream piece, because there's counters to the counters when the developers of the all-conquering *Half-Life* turned on the Steam. On one hand, Steam is an online delivery system that Valve has forced upon *Half-Life 2* customers, which is a bit of a shock to the system for gamers. People are citing the need to register Steam to be a system as unfair, as it stops them from lending the game to a friend, or trading it. Bad news people, what's happening here is that you're not having your rights taken away from you... You didn't have those rights in the first place. When you buy a game, you only ever buy the license to play that game under certain conditions. All those times you clicked on 'I Agree', that's what you were agreeing to. So it's actually ludicrous people are grumbling about that, what they should be grumbling about is how poorly it was implemented.

I myself wasted the better part of an afternoon having to do all sorts of uninstalling and reinstalling just to keep playing *Half-Life 2* when Steam bugged out during an update I didn't even get to say yes to. Things like this do little to encourage gamers to want to use content delivery systems like Steam again. The reason that's something to grumble about is that what Valve did took incredible balls, but it could have done online distribution a real disservice.

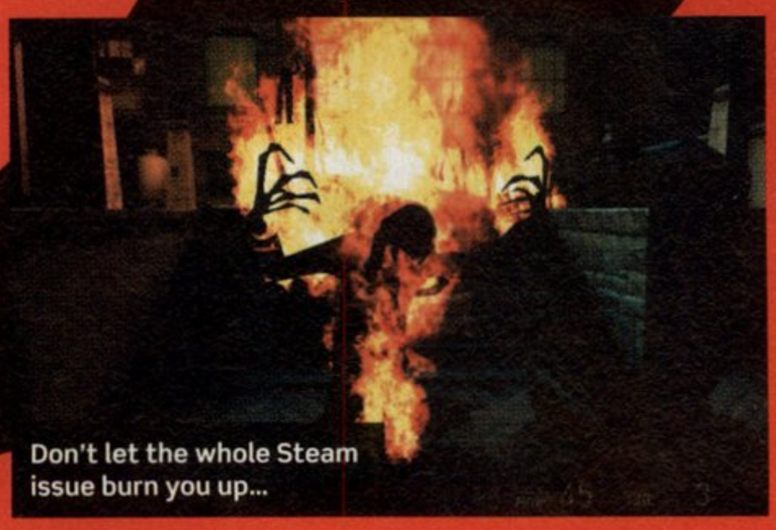
Without getting into the issue of whether or not what that did to Vivendi was right or wrong, it set the precedent that a major game developer was willing to try and set up a means to get its game straight to the public. This isn't entirely new, but it's entirely new for a developer to cut out a publisher and come out the other side better for it.

Big gonads result in big rewards, and even though only a small percentage of *Half-Life 2* copies were sold via Steam, the profit margins on those copies for Valve were big – big enough to get the developer of the next 'big thing' thinking, "Do we really need a publisher?"

A couple of them may not need one, but this won't change gaming completely, and publishers will always be a part of computer gaming. Every game that isn't a sequel to a massive hit needs PR and marketing to actually get noticed in the first place, and more importantly, hardly any developers can self-finance themselves to create a game. Not a good one anyway.

Developers can't ignore the merits of the idea though. Steam staved off piracy long enough to make *Half-Life 2* capitalise on its eager audience, which is great, but alienating an eager fan base is not. The reaction of the gamers may dictate the validity of online game delivery in the near future, and for that reason, how Valve deals with things from here is really important. If they load it with new content regularly and turn it into something that really feels like a service to the average punter, all will be forgiven (once forgotten). From there you can put money on another developer stepping up to try and do the same thing without winding up in court. The end result would be cheaper games

So don't let a bad experience with Steam upset you too much yet, as we may well look back on it as that '*Half-Life 2* hiccup' that inspired a bunch of developers to try and push their games from good to great in an effort to be able to have an audience big enough to sell direct to.



Don't let the whole Steam issue burn you up...

The fate of a Kingdom is in your hands

5+ Million units sold worldwide

THE SETTLERS®
HERITAGE OF KINGS™

Dynamic weather conditions directly influence gameplay and can be used strategically to your advantage.

Choose from over 70 buildings to construct a vast city brimming with life through research and trade links.

Command six heroes and diverse military units using a wide range of strategic choices.

www.thesettlers.com

FEBRUARY 2005

PC CD-ROM

G8+ LOW LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

UBISOFT™

© 2004 Red Storm Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. The Settlers, The Settlers Heritage of Kings, Blue Byte and the Blue Byte logo are trademarks of Red Storm Entertainment in the US and/or other countries. Ubisoft and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the US and/or other countries. Red Storm Entertainment Inc is a Ubisoft Entertainment company. Developed by Blue Byte Software.

Eyewitness Undercover

Illustrations by **David Lyttleton**

Ever wondered why **Duke Nukem Forever** is taking... well, forever? Maybe it's because 3D Realms have run out of ideas. Their boss man George Broussard appealed for help on their forums asking fans for: "Any interesting scripted events... nothing too complex. I'm talking about little 5-8 second things that you can see happening in the distance, or as you enter a new area, or whatever."

Word of a new **Rainbow Six** game leaked out during the Spy's summer holiday. PC gamers are promised a 'darker story', more sniping than they can eat, a battle against bioterrorists and a new subtitle: *Lockdown*. Autumn, say Ubisoft. Oh yeah? says the Spy.

Valve have won round one of their court case against publishers Vivendi. The initial ruling prevents Vivendi from distributing Valve games in cyber cafes and allows the developers to recover damages based on breach of copyright. The battle is far from over though and further claims for breach of contract between the two companies will be heard in the new year.

Loved **Warhammer 40K: Dawn of War**? Disappointed it was so short? Not to fear: the Spy hears rumours of an official expansion that will feature the Tyranids, a fearsome species of bio-monsters. Even if that doesn't work out, there's a promising mod in production to add these creatures to the roster anyway. Now all we need are the Squats...

Meanwhile, back in post-Communist Russia, plans are afoot to indoctrinate a generation with videogames. Hey, Vlad! No need to organise use of the ostrich feather.

What is certain is that a new **Age of Empires 3** game is looming and looking lovely. Ensemble's site has been carrying a teaser, and the Spy is accumulating further evidence in time for next month's issue.

Meanwhile, the Spy had to put his suit into the dry cleaners after extracting word of the next **Tomb Raider** from an uncooperative source. It will be unveiled early next year, but why can't the Spy ever do this the easy way? Blood is hell to shift when it drys. And EA have admitted they're working on the next **C&C: Red Alert**, which will use a beefed up version of the *C&C: Generals* engine to meet modern standards. That's it. Spy out.

Pssst! It's...

The Spy

Mother Goose plumps her feathers in the old barn tonight. And the Spy is feeling lucky [slaps on extra cologne].

You wish to talk to the Spy? He speaks only in the language of secrets!

it – it just happens by itself, you know. But seriously, folks. On a recent unofficial visit to the Kremlin, the Spy noted plans to set up the ominously titled Ready for Work and Defence of the Motherland programme. Apparently, the Russian apparatchiks are worried that patriotism is on the wane among the young, particularly with US culture so pervasive.

Doom is cited as a less-than-positive influence on Russian whippersnappers, and although the initiative will largely consist of rallies, sports and activity groups, videogames are also identified.

There's an official **Stargate** game in the works from local development outfit Perception. But apart from a Spring 2005 release date, they've yet to spill further beans, despite the Spy's uncompromising

The Bard's Tale™

Coming Soon

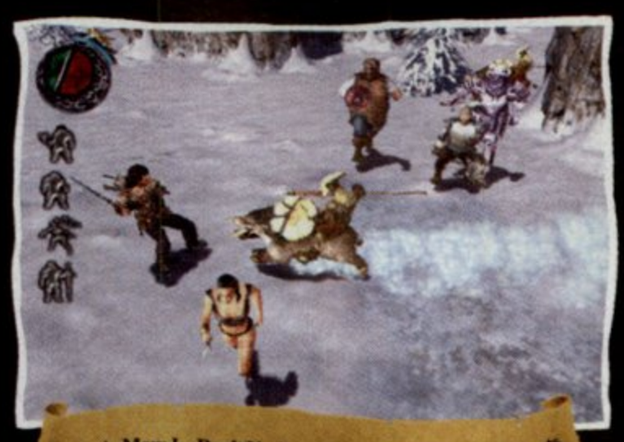
"...Right Now, There Is No Other Game In The Genre That Looks Remotely As Good."
- PSM

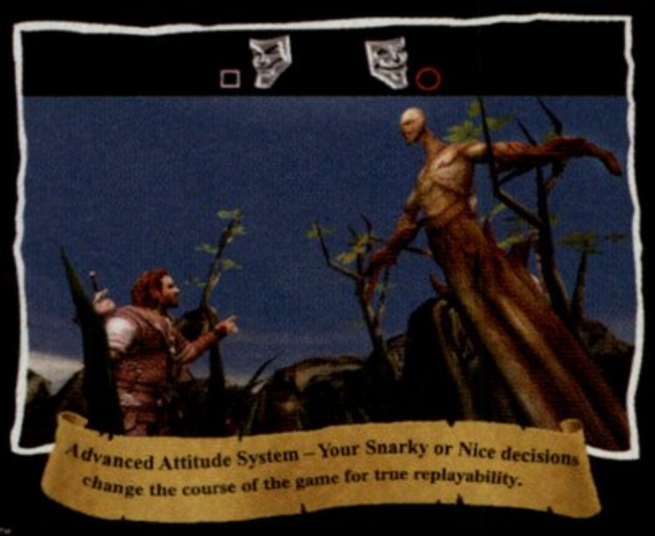
"...It Has Skyrocketed To The Top Of My Most-Wanted Games List."
- Gamespy

"Turning RPG Clichés On Their Head."
- Electronic Gaming Monthly

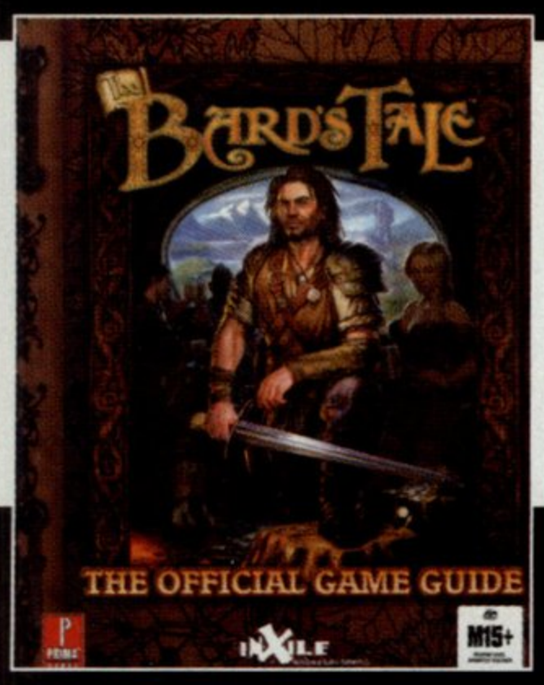
"...Intelligent Scriptwriting And A Well-Developed Sense Of Humor."
- GamePro

Summon Eccentric Characters To Do Your Dirty Work, Like This Poor Old Bastard Who Finds Traps...the Hard Way.


Less A, More I – Don't Underestimate Your Crafty Opponents


Advanced Attitude System – Your Snarky or Nice decisions change the course of the game for true replayability.

inXile entertainment™



Preorder at EB GAMES™ electronics boutique® and receive The Bards Tale Prima Guide*

(* while stocks last - conditions apply.)

PlayStation® PlayStation 2 XBOX

M15+ MEDIUM LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

© 2004 inXile entertainment. All rights reserved. The Bard's Tale is a trademark or registered trademark of inXile entertainment in certain countries; and is a trademark or registered trademark of Electronic Arts Inc. in certain other countries where it is used under license. inXile entertainment and the inXile logo are trademarks of inXile entertainment. THQ and the THQ logo are registered trademarks of THQ, Inc. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

JFK: Reloaded

Where were you when you shot Kennedy?

The first shot shatters the windscreen, it is deflected and enters the driver's right thigh. The pain, or the impact, or the shock, or whatever is enough to force his foot down onto the accelerator, sending the car careering into a lamppost. The occupants tumble forward before jerking back into place. Then comes the second shot. It crops the Governor's left shoulder and straight back out. Its angle is ever so slightly altered, just enough for it to be pushed upwards, into Kennedy's face. A gaping, horrific wound is opened, through which, from your position on the sixth floor of the Texas Book Depository, you get a glimpse of blue matter beneath the scalp. Kennedy slumps forward, the remnants of his fixed grin mocking the macabre hole in his head. Jackie wobbles in position, arms forward, still smiling to an invisible crowd, like some kind of demented mannequin. Fade to black. A New High Score!

Distasteful? Yes. But hey, it's just a game. A scene from *JFK: Reloaded* in fact, released this month to massive condemnation by the mainstream media. It's an unnervingly accurate recreation of a defining moment in American history, complete with a complex ballistics model, rag-doll physics, chaotic behaviour patterns that mimic some of the panic and confusion felt by the bystanders and security detail. By recreating Dealey Plaza, and the conditions of fire so precisely, *JFK* is more than a grisly sniper sandbox. It's the banner game of a new phenomenon, 'news-gaming', where political statements and recent events are be brought to life through games. You learn by playing.

ON THE DISC Demo & Interviews with Gonzalo and Kirk › Resources

Kirk Ewing, of Traffic Games, the company behind *JFK: Reloaded* is talking to a press tour of the US. He explains that even the earliest prototypes did much to debunk the fringe interpretations of the events in Dallas. "There was a debate between everyone who was involved as to whether there was a conspiracy. The first demos that we did helped galvanise our opinion that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone.

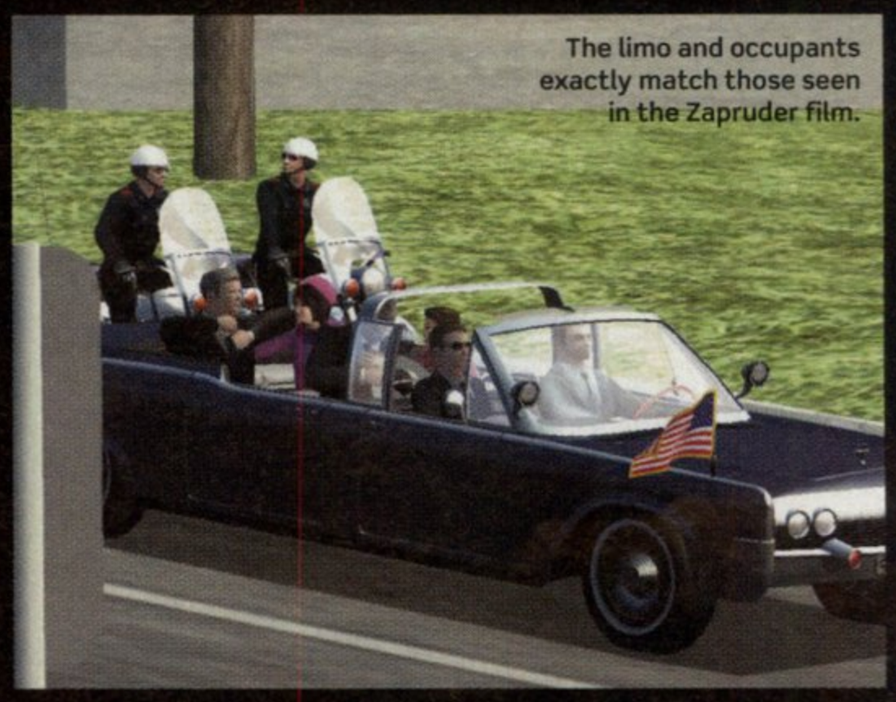
Taking a shot in *JFK: Reloaded* isn't a pleasant experience

70% of Americans still believe in the conspiracy, and that is probably due to the Oliver Stone movie, JFK. He changed the thinking of a whole generation about what actually happened."

Taking a shot in *JFK: Reloaded* isn't a pleasant experience. The thrill you might feel when landing your shots in *Counter-Strike* or *Halo* is deadened, by the explicit realisation that this happened. You learn that within the rules of this simulation it would have been possible for Oswald to kill the President. In fact, that's the idea. Ewing's company has disturbingly put a bounty on Kennedy, offering anything from $10,000 to a $100,000 for the player who can match the Warren Commission's official verdict. When you're given the chance to trace the routes bullets take after deflection, spinning and rotating the camera to find the best angle, even the maligned 'magic bullet' theory, makes more sense.

Gonzalo Frasca, a game-researcher at the University of Copenhagen and author of a range of news games believes that playing the game results in a deeper understanding of the assassination. "I think *JFK: Reloaded* is an excellent example of how to benefit from the potential of videogames as a persuasive/informative tool. My interactive, first-person Oswald perspective made me realise that it was not an easy shot, at least with my skills. After playing the game, I watched Stone's film and, while it delivered a lot of information, it was a totally different experience."

So why the media outcry? What's wrong with simulating the death of a public figure? "We touched a nerve on a whole bunch of levels," says Kirk. "The so-called 'baby boomer' generation of Americans who were alive and witnessed the assassination find it difficult to revisit the event, especially through the medium of a game." Gonzalo agrees. "There is an old cultural bias against playing with real events. People associate games with entertainment. Books and films can be disturbing and interesting, but hardly qualify as entertaining. Games do not, and should not, be only seen as a form of having a good time. We can learn plenty of things from games, and some of those things can be painful. There is nothing wrong with that."



The limo and occupants exactly match those seen in the Zapruder film.

Interactive document, or tasteless toy? You decide.

README

Publisher Traffic Games
Link www.jfkreloaded.com
ETA Out now

Tilted Mill Entertainment

SEGA
www.sega.co.uk

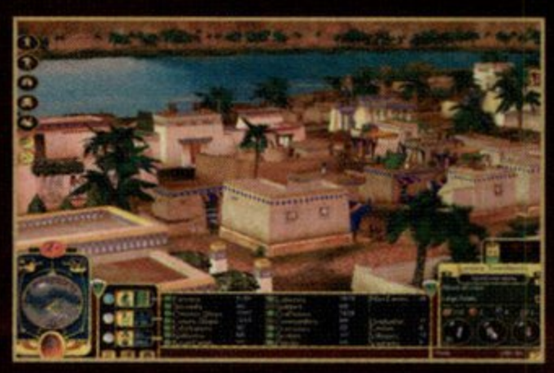
FROM THE LEAD DESIGNER OF PHARAOH™ COMES AN EVOLUTION IN THE GENRE

IMMORTAL CITIES CHILDREN OF THE NILE™

"...stunning 3D environments acting almost like a living city..."
PC Format

"This is what made PC gaming great."
PC Gamer

The first game of its type to feature a true 3D graphics engine, which allows you to explore the world you have created.

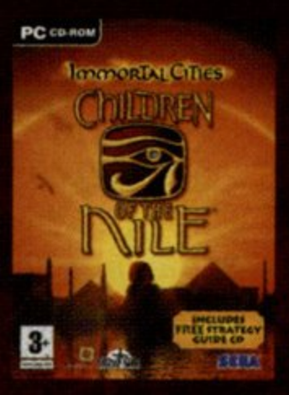


Revolutionary controls designed to suit your level of experience.

Unique behavioural technology means that subjects act and react realistically to the environment built around them.

Get up close and personal with your citizens, or view them from on high, with macro and micro viewpoints.

Nobody said being Pharaoh was going to be easy. Like it or not, your people have minds of their own. Only by keeping them happy and earning their respect can you ever hope to create your own thriving 3D society, empire and dynasty.



GREAT NATIONS DON'T JUST BUILD THEMSELVES - YOU DO.

www.children-of-the-nile.com

© 2004 Myelin Media, LLC. Published under license by SEGA Europe Limited. All rights reserved. Immortal Cities: Children of the Nile is the trademark of Myelin Media, LLC. SEGA and the SEGA logo are trademarks of the SEGA Corporation. Pharaoh is the registered trademark and property of Sierra On-line, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

THIS IS HARDCORE

For a few genres more

Craig 'Toilet! Duck!' Pearson

THIS IS...

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

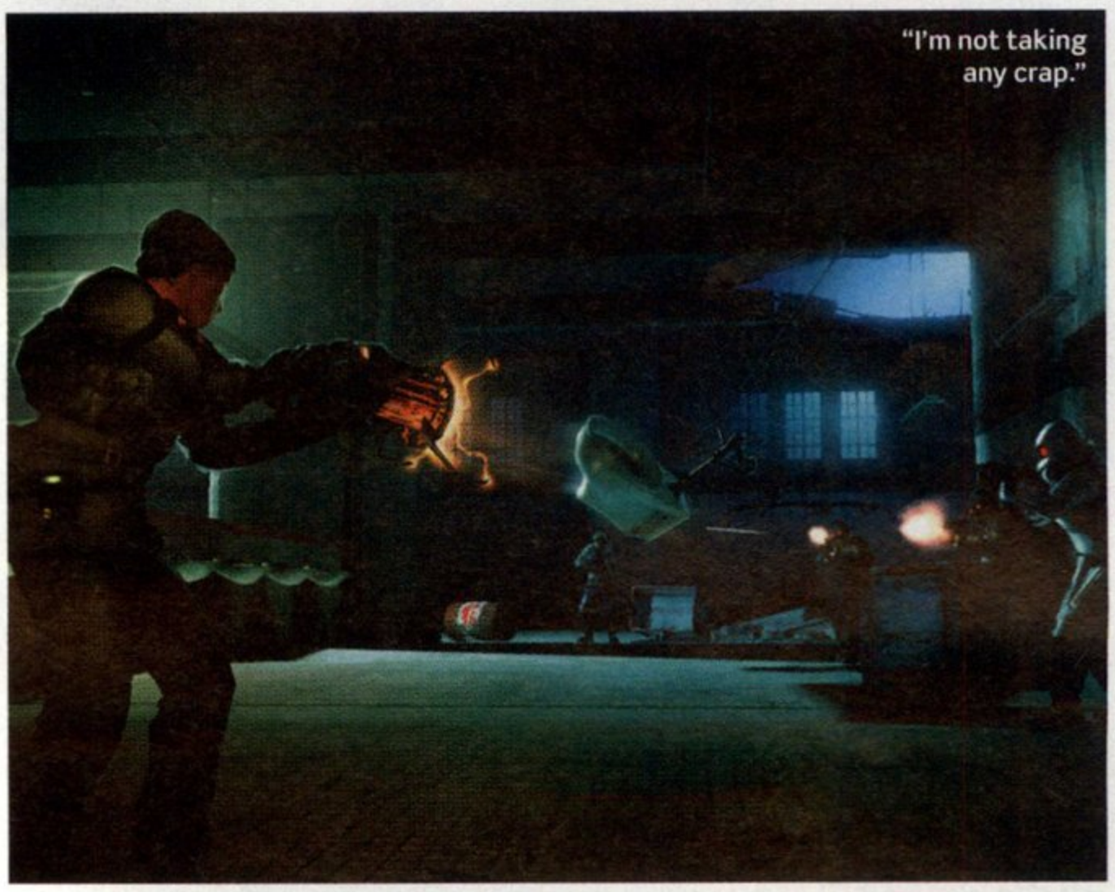
Valve showed Steam's worth this month, effortlessly adding themed deathmatch to the previously barren mega-game, all for free.

The update brought with it the wondrous prospect of cutting down your foes with a urinal launched from the Grav Gun. To the face. If there's anything that screams 'ownage' to us, it's porcelain to the piehole. Mind you, double ownage is possible by waiting for someone to launch a Grav Gun assault at you and using your own gun to pluck the projectile from the air and hammer it straight back at them. Or detonating flying explosive barrels before they reach you. It's a whole mess of hilarious gaming action that brings new meaning to the expression 'Damaging the Doulton.' It's only a matter of time until two players stand either side of a corridor entrance, throwing a loo back and forth like a sort of high impact security beam.

Toilet humour

The Grav Gun can throw everything from pots to cars around the map, and Valve have populated the game world with plenty of stackables.

The two-map add-on was released to give the modders a solid base to work from, and the fans something to sate their toilet-flinging desires. Hilariously, the first update actually broke a lot of the Steam-based games and almost no-one could play it anyway, but Valve quickly sorted out the problems and everything's now running with a nice diminutive ping.



"I'm not taking any crap."

Mad as a hatter? Contact Craig at **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au**

Michelle 'Super' Starr

THIS IS...

ONLINE

It's time to fasten your catheters, folks, and make sure those IV feed tubes are flowing. Those canny foxes at Sony have come up with a cunning plan to lure us into the first of what will undoubtedly be many *EverQuest II* updates.

The new "adventure pack," as it will be known, will offer access to a new area, new bogeymen to kill, new items, and new quests – missions to flesh out the story of the Dark Elf race, and cast some light on the events of the 500 odd years between the original *EverQuest* and *EverQuest II*.

Now the cunning part: the first part of the pack will be available as a free download – meaning all subscribers can get a taste of the new area, and get a start on the storylines. Then, if you wish to continue on and see the rest of the area, and pick up the rest of the quests and story, you can pay a "small fee" to download the rest of the content.

EQ2. Kill wildlife in exotic, undiscovered lands.

MMOvolution

The implications? If it kicks off, it's probably only to be expected that Sony will follow up with more packs in the same vein. Now, it could just be a ploy to make us part with more of our hard-earned cash, but it goes a long way towards addressing some of the problems with boxed expansions. Players will have a chance to see the new content for themselves before they commit to buying anything, and even players who may not want to pay additional money will have access to new areas of the game.

Out in the ether? Message Michelle at **michelle@derwenthoward.com.au**

THIS IS...

SIMULATION

Tim 'Space-man' Stone

Despite being an obscure show on cable that most of you definitely missed, the recent docudrama *Space Odyssey* definitely makes it into my top 20 TV favourites for 2004. If it also had you hooked then you have every reason to be excited by the impending release of the new version of freeware space flight simulator *Orbiter* (**www.orbitersim.com**)

Major enhancements like virtual cockpits, revamped astrodynamics, and greatly improved planet visuals really have been worth the wait. While sadly I can't share with you the polished beta that's currently in my possession, we'll be deploying the finished build via our cover disc the second it's good and ready.

Atmospheres are now more... atmospheric.

BoB, the rebuild

Another free treat soon to grace PCGA's plastic platter – the 0.99 update for *Rowan's Battle of Britain* – could well be the last for a while from skilful source-code meddlers BDG. The team have just announced that they've joined forces with publisher GMX, and developer Shockwave Productions (the maker's of *FirePower*, one of the better *CFS3* add-ons) on an intriguing commercial *BoB* refurbishment project. Hopefully more than just a cosmetic makeover, *Wings of Victory* should pancake onto shop shelves in February, allowing the coalition to shift their attention to another cloud-couched classic, *B-17 Flying Fortress: The Mighty Eighth.*

Hubble trouble? Contact Tim at **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au**

Mark 'Gladius' Donald

THIS IS...

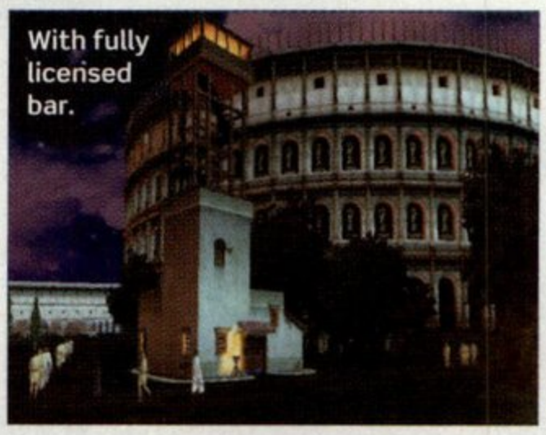
STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT

Building games are played more in the head than on the screen. Whether the mighty monument to your glory be an empire, a theme park, a football team or a Swiss light railway system, the success of *Tycoon/Giant/Civ* and *Sim* games relies on the virtual mechanics and schematics appearing to be a convincing projection of the yet grander schemes in your head.

Games like *Football Manager* play it safe with abstract graphics that can represent any degree of complexity for the lithe-minded and committed. But on the other hand, games such as *Heart of Empire: Rome* are trying to open the eyes of non-believers with glittering streets of 3D.

Totally featured...

While the management element reads like the 'to do' list of the interim Iraqui government, the real draw is the chance to promenade through the Coliseum



and turn left at the aqueduct. Developers Deep Red will further breathe life into the ancient city by letting you stalk citizens with a tag cam and eavesdrop on market traders, like a Latin KGB or MIV. Then there's the bread, circuses, chariot races – it's enough to give you sandal-wood.

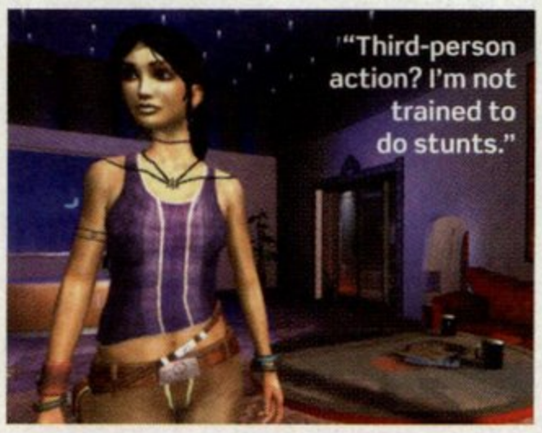
And while in Rome... take a look at the *Rome Total War* stories phenomenon that's growing on **http://rtw.heavengames.com**. Click on the war stories forum for player-yarned tales of treacherous Thracians and Selucid slaughter in the woods.

Mark will lend you his ears at
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

THIS IS...

RPG/ADVENTURE

The 2D adventure isn't dead, it's just undead. Developer Autumn Moon are currently working on *A Vampyre Story*, an adventure game in the style of the classics of old. Worth noting, is that some of the staff at Autumn Moon cut their teeth at LucasArts back in the day when adventure games still featured on their release schedule (a minute's silence for *Sam & Max: Freelance Police*, thank you). The game looks to continue the tried and true 'mouse-over' mechanic that adventure gamers know so well, and we can't help but feel grateful for that fact. No 3D engine, no clumsy attempt at innovation – just give us a great 2D adventure like they used to make thanks!

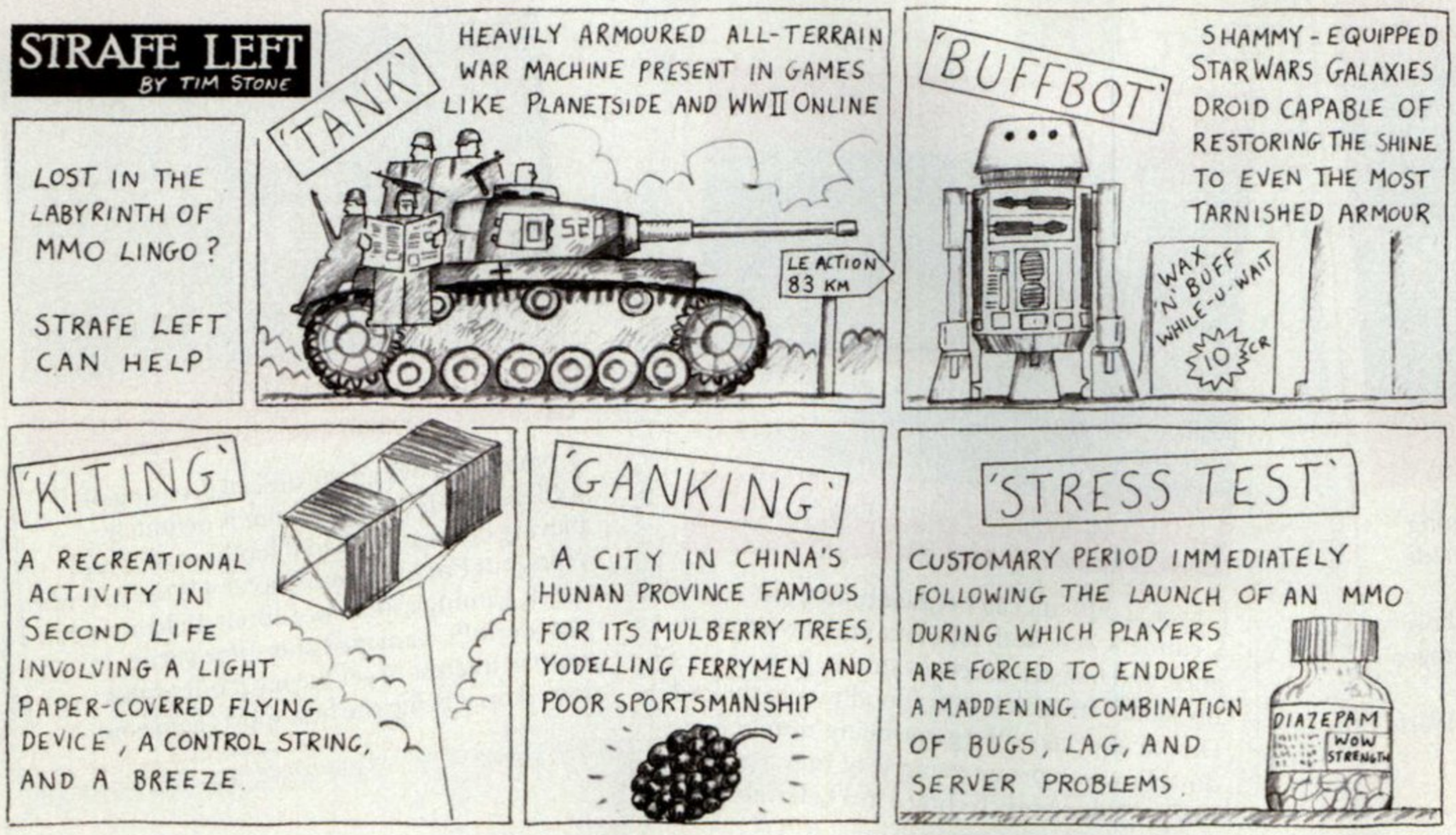


Dreamy stuff

An adventure that is risking the camera perspective quibbles of 3D is Funcom's *Dreamfall*, the sequel to the wonderful *The Longest Journey*. Though Funcom are calling it a "third-person action/adventure", we think that's just something for their marketing team to say, it's actually a bonafide Adventure Game. Don't tell anyone. *Dreamfall* promises the flexibility of three different characters and multiple solutions to its puzzles, and is currently the most anticipated adventure of 2005.

Eliot 'Go' Fish

Alter-ego interests? Email Eliot at
eliot@derwenthoward.com.au


STRAFE LEFT
BY TIM STONE
LOST IN THE LABYRINTH OF MMO LINGO?
STRAFE LEFT CAN HELP
'TANK'
HEAVILY ARMOURED ALL-TERRAIN WAR MACHINE PRESENT IN GAMES LIKE PLANETSIDE AND WWII ONLINE
LE ACTION 83 KM
'BUFFBOT'
SHAMMY-EQUIPPED STAR WARS GALAXIES DROID CAPABLE OF RESTORING THE SHINE TO EVEN THE MOST TARNISHED ARMOUR
WAX 'N' BUFF WHILE-U-WAIT
10 CR
'KITING'
A RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY IN SECOND LIFE INVOLVING A LIGHT PAPER-COVERED FLYING DEVICE, A CONTROL STRING, AND A BREEZE.
'GANKING'
A CITY IN CHINA'S HUNAN PROVINCE FAMOUS FOR ITS MULBERRY TREES, YODELLING FERRYMEN AND POOR SPORTSMANSHIP
'STRESS TEST'
CUSTOMARY PERIOD IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE LAUNCH OF AN MMO DURING WHICH PLAYERS ARE FORCED TO ENDURE A MADDENING COMBINATION OF BUGS, LAG, AND SERVER PROBLEMS.
DIAZEPAM
WOW STRENGTH

James 'Alley cat' Cottee

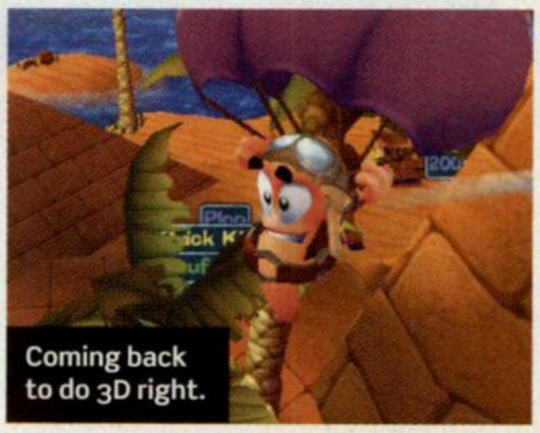
THIS IS...

ODDBALL

Terrible news for fans of light-synths, old-school shooters and furry quadrupeds. Jeff Minter, the legendary one-man programming team behind such greats as *Llamatron* and *Sheep In Space* has been forced to abandon his latest project, *Unity*. This transcendent, all-encompassing, trip-a-tronic extravaganza was set to make *Rez* look like Weather Watch, right up until Lionhead pulled the plug. It seems poor Jeff wouldn't have been able to finish the game before its platform (GameCube) went off the market. The chance of a PC port now seems to be around zero, but Llamasoft fans need not despair. It's still possible to find beat up copies of *Tempest 2000* in bargain bins (the going rate's around $4), and there are some freeware and shareware goodies to be had from: **www.llamasoft.co.uk**

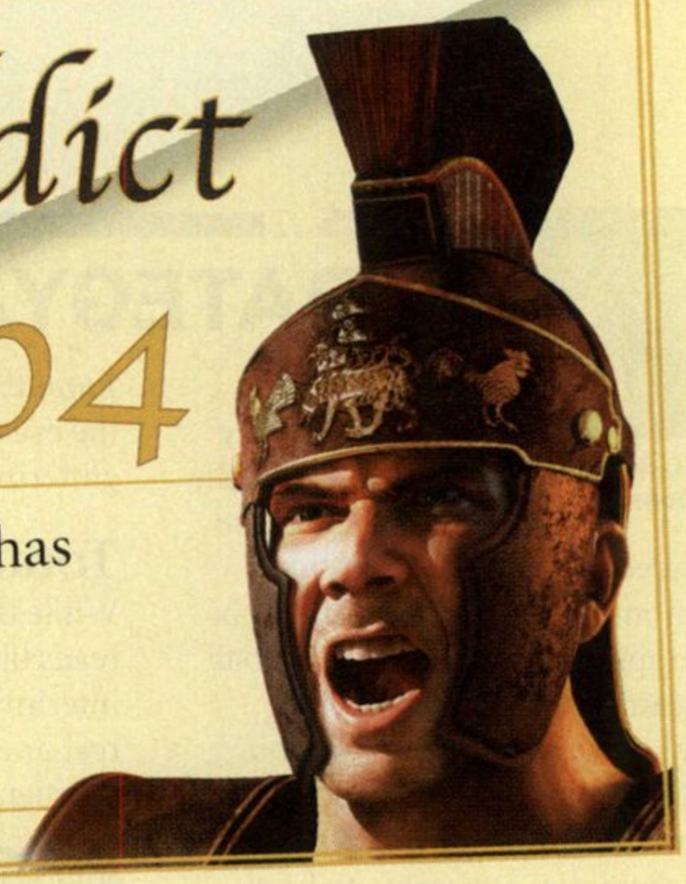
The Worm Turns

Exploding out of nowhere was the news that *Worms 4: Mayhem* will be para-dropping in before the middle of this year, in fact. Once again, the environments will be destructible, with unpredictable terrain damage effects livening things up after the snooze-inducing *Worms: Forts*. New features will include the ability to custom-build new weapons: homing hamsters, laser-guided penguins, that sort of thing. The new Sentry Gun weapon sounds deliciously Aliens-esque, and the raining cows of the Bovine Blitz should give the French Sheep Strike a run for its money. But will it actually be fun to play? There's only a few short months until we find out... www.wormsmayhem.com



Need to find peace? ask Tim at
tim.edwards@futurenet.co.uk

PC Games Addict Awards 2004



It was the best year in PC gaming yet, and now that the dust has settled PC Games Addict brings you the best of those twelve glittering months of gaming goodness in two concise pages. If you're missing something here, you're missing out!

Best FPS

NOMINEES: Half-Life 2, Unreal Tournament 2004, Far Cry

WINNER: Half-Life 2

■ **Publisher** Vivendi ■ **Developer** Valve

No surprises here, Half-Life 2 gave us the same dose of wild first-person sci-fi action adventure that made Gordan Freeman's first outing top of so many 'Best PC Game Ever' lists. Astounding physics, excellent AI, a thrill-a-minute plot and all the multiplayer FPS indulgence a gamer could want all helped to make Half-Life 2 the FPS on target.

Best Tactical Shooter

NOMINEES: Counter Strike: Source, Joint Operations, Battlefield: Vietnam

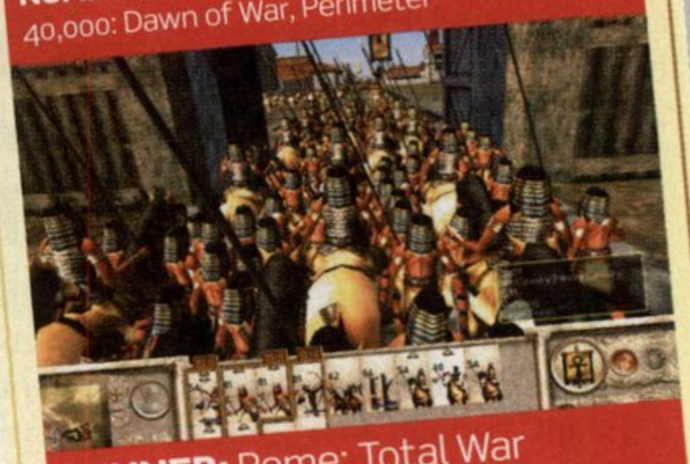
WINNER: Counter Strike: Source

■ **Publisher** Valve ■ **Developer** Valve

We were a little loathe to give it to a game that was not new in so many ways, but Counter Strike: Source is ultra-popular around the PC gaming world for a reason – it rocks. Now it doesn't just rock, it looks better to the point that watching is almost as enthralling as playing – one of the hurdles of making gaming a spectator 'sport'.

Best Strategy

NOMINEES: Rome: Total War, Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War, Perimeter



WINNER: Rome: Total War

■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** Creative Assembly

Creative Assembly didn't really miss a thing. Smoothly integrating spectacular real-time 3D tactical battles into a deep turn-based strategy campaign made Rome: Total War the complete package. Powerfully presented and loaded with historically authentic material, Rome is one of those rare strategy games that can win over action purists.

Best Persistent Online

NOMINEES: World of Warcraft, Everquest II, City of Heroes

WINNER: World of Warcraft

■ **Publisher** Vivendi ■ **Developer** Blizzard

Blizzard has a habit of redefining gaming genres, and World of Warcraft has made the relatively unpopular MMORPG into something people want to play. So many have wanted to that supply hasn't been able to meet demand, and with Blizzard's upcoming Battlegrounds update around the corner, World of Warcraft looks certain to stay the hot MMOG for a while to come.

Best RPG

NOMINEES: Deus Ex: Invisible War, Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines, Sacred

WINNER: Deus Ex: Invisible War

■ **Publisher** Eidos ■ **Developer** Ion Storm

It was a difficult call because both front runners were both fabulous and flawed all at once, and boasted excellent stories, but Invisible War took it over Bloodlines in the end. Despite aspects of the game being 'dumbed down', it was a prime example of how a game can provide so much choice in a believable world, the foundation of all great RPGs.

Best Sports

NOMINEES: Pro Evolution Soccer 4, Football Manager 2005

WINNER: Pro Evolution Soccer 4

■ **Publisher** Konami ■ **Developer** Konami

It may not have all the official licensing of FIFA, and EA's football sim is definitely playing better now than it has been in recent years, but Pro Evolution Soccer 4 is the best raw sports gaming experience about. Reliance upon a modern PC gamepad and some vague football interest to get the most out of this don't stop it being the best sports game out.

Best Adventure

NOMINEES: Nothing was worthy!

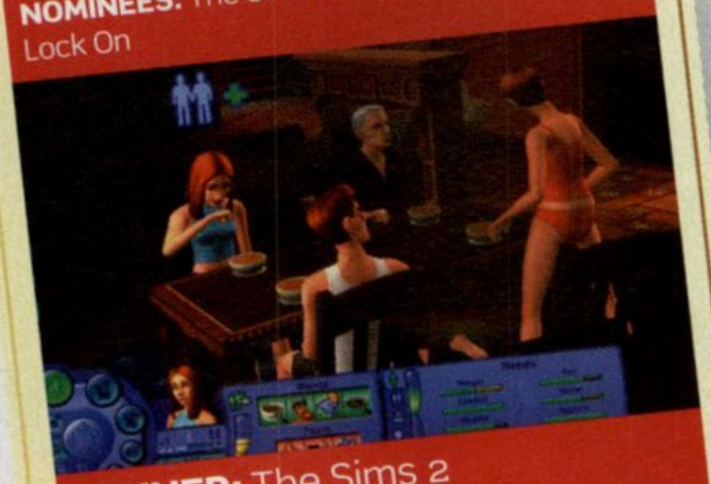
LOSER: Adventure Gamers

■ **Publisher** N/A ■ **Developer** N/A

Not recognising this? That's okay, it's the void that was adventure gaming in the 2004 calendar year. Yep, the sad truth of the matter is that 2004 was possibly the worst year in PC adventure gaming in some time. Hopefully, Dreamfall should be about to make 2005 a much better year for the indulgent virtual adventurer.

Best Simulation

NOMINEES: The Sims 2, Pacific Fighters, Lock On



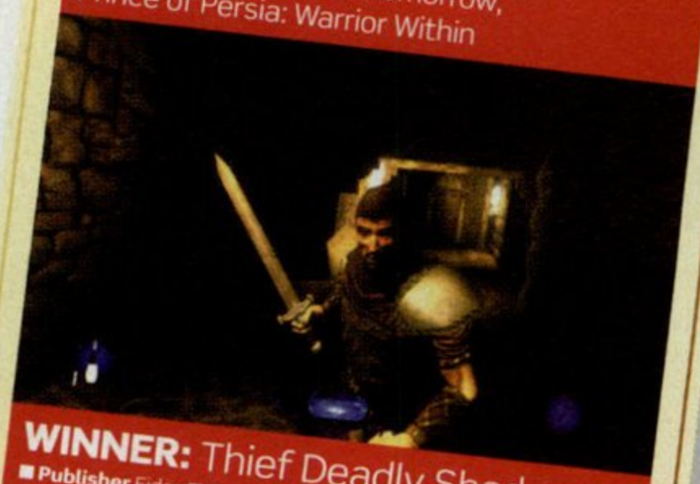
WINNER: The Sims 2

■ **Publisher** Electronic Arts ■ **Developer** Maxis

Okay, it may be odd sticking them in the same bracket, but the Sims 2 really was far and away the best virtual experience on offer, even if it had little to do with reality. Maxis took things to the next level with the introduction of families and genetics, helping create that ludicrously broad appeal that assures this series its dominance of the gaming sales charts.

Best Action-Adventure

NOMINEES: Thief: Deadly Shadows, Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow, Prince of Persia: Warrior Within



WINNER: Thief Deadly Shadows

■ **Publisher** Eidos ■ **Developer** Ion Storm

We don't condone burglary, but Thief: Deadly Shadows undeniably makes mastering the art of break and enter immensely satisfying. Superb use of the latest light and sound technology make Garrett's latest medieval stealth adventure all that more atmospheric and convincing. A-grade stealth!

Best Driving

NOMINEES: V8 Supercars 2, Colin McRae 2005, Need For Speed Underground 2

WINNER: V8 Supercars 2

■ **Publisher** Codemasters ■ **Developer** Codemasters

Codemasters went out to prove a point with V8 Supercars 2, but it wasn't just aimed at fans of our beloved touring car series, this was the all-round race driving package – with all the bells and whistles. Driving everything from racing truck cabs through to vintage sports cars, and offering high impact with full damage modeling, V8SC2 was the champ this season.

Best Oddball

NOMINEES: Sid Meier's Pirates, Perimeter

WINNER: Sid Meier's Pirates!

■ **Publisher** Atari ■ **Developer** Firaxis

Firaxis may like to call Pirates! an adventure game, but it's really a collection of mini-games, none of which require serious twitch reflexes. Comical and charming rather than detailed and realistic, Pirates is made deep by its diversity, and this modern day remake didn't disappoint fans of the '80s classic. Regardless of clearly having a theme, Pirates is really like no other game. An oddball.

Best Graphics

NOMINEES: Doom 3, Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow, Half-Life 2

WINNER: Doom 3

■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** Id Software

Doom 3 tore apart the FPS world for a reason, specifically because John Carmack delivered that mind-blowing game engine that raised the bar on so many levels, but the game wasn't that deep as a shooter by today's standards. Quick, simple tweaking makes a massive difference with Doom 3, and anyone with a decent gaming PC at least needs to see this running to see the top end of the spectrum.

Best Sound

NOMINEES: Rome: Total War, Thief: Deadly Shadows, Half-Life 2

WINNER: Rome: Total War

■ **Publisher** Activsion ■ **Developer** Creative Assermbly

Australian Jeff Van Dyk has won BAFTA awards for his work on the Total War series, and anyone who has played Rome will understand why. The blend of outstanding positional 3D sound that strikes a balance between realism and playability, mixed with musical tapestries that set all manner moods make this one of those rare strategy games where the audio is given so much love.

The Best Game of 2004...

NOMINEES: Half-Life 2, Rome Total War World of Warcraft, Unreal Tournament 2004

WINNER: Half-Life 2

■ **Publisher** Vivendi ■ **Developer** Valve

Despite royally upsetting a whole bunch of its customers with the problems with Steam, Valve really delivered the goods when it came to Half-Life 2 itself – the second coming was not a let down. Valve nailed a development system that let them focus more on making the game's story work because things in the world worked the way they should.

That may not sound like an exciting reason for why HL2 kicked arse, but when you consider that it's responsible for how much of Gordon Freeman's second adventure felt real without being in your face – we put the brilliance of the end product a result of smart game making.

It's that wonderfully uncomfortable blend of feeling like you're in a limitless sandbox and hunted like an animal all at once. Complete with the best tactical shooter of '04, Counter Strike: Source, it's worth risking getting burned by steam for.

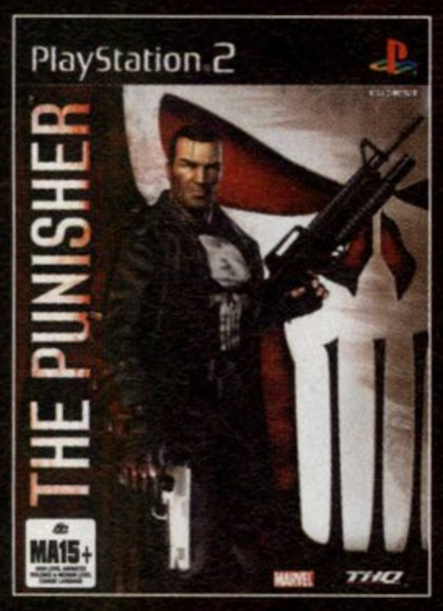
Actual in game interrogation

MA15+
HIGH LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE & MEDIUM LEVEL COARSE LANGUAGE

WHAT'S IT FEEL LIKE TO DRILL THE HEAD OF THE PUNK WHO STOLE YOUR FAMILY FROM YOU?

Preorder at EB GAMES™ electronics boutique®
and receive The Punisher T-Shirt*

(* while stocks last - conditions apply.)



BECOME THE PUNISHER™

AVAILABLE NOW

PlayStation 2 XBOX PC CD ROM MARVEL volition inc THQ

© 2004 THQ Inc. MARVEL, The Punisher and the distinctive likeness(es) thereof are trademarks of Marvel Characters, Inc. and are used with permission. Copyright © 2004 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved. www.marvel.com. The Punisher is produced under license from Marvel Characters. Inc. Volition, Inc. ®, THQ and their respective logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks, logos and copyrights are property of their respective owners.. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks, logos and copyrights are property of their respective owners. " " and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

2005 IS THE YEAR...

...*Everything* changes

BY TIM EDWARDS

A new year brings with it a fresh start for PC games. Inspired by 2004's success stories, a new batch of blockbuster games are on their way. But something has changed. Next year's hit titles won't succeed on the back of technology, on the promise of faster, cleverer, graphics or big brand names. It is ideas that will succeed. Gaming ideas that inspire and feed the imagination. No longer does it make sense to place games in genre ghettos. Ideas cross-pollinate and influences merge to create the new trends that will dominate PC gaming in 2005. We reveal them all...

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO NEXT YEAR
16 PAGES OF FUTURISTIC INFO

2005 IS THE YEAR...

26 Games make us all-powerful
The new God Mode: now showing in *Black & White 2*

28 Of Science Fiction
Everything is alien in *Quake IV*

30 We go places
Location is everything in *GTA: San Andreas*

32 Games make history
Is *Brothers in Arms* a World War II documentary?

34 We play together
Arresting citizens is a team effort in *SWAT 4*

35 That stories truly matter
The mature, compelling story of *The Sith Lords*

36 We're afraid of the dark
Can *Resurrection of Evil* put a chill up our spines?

38 Of the 20-sided dice
Dragonshard leads a new wave of D&D games

40 Games make the news
Battlefield 2 hits the headlines

Doom 3: Ressurection of Evil promises to up the scare quota. See page 36

2005 IS THE YEAR...

Games make us all-powerful

Games are empowerment dressed as entertainment. We inflict our will on entire worlds. Yet the shape of our powers is changing. In 2005, power is not about crushing civilisations or conquering galaxies. It's about manipulating individual destinies.

BLACK & WHITE 2

■ **Publisher** Electronic Arts ■ **Developer** Black & White Studios ■ **ETA** Late 2005

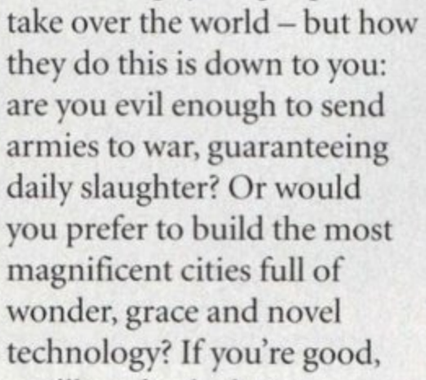
INTERVIEW
Ron Millar, Designer, Black & White Studios

PCGA: Why is nurturing a massive cow in *Black & White 2*, or an electric family in *The Sims 2* such a big draw for players?
Nurturing can also mean having total influence over something else and that is a very powerful feeling. In real life everyone has to put up with being told what they have to do, but in *Black & White 2* you are always in control. Meanwhile, most people enjoying caring for something which is absolutely their creation and unique to them.

PCGA: Physics engines are commonplace in first person-shooters, yet we've hardly seen them in a strategy or management game. What do they allow you to do, as a designer, that you couldn't three or four years ago?
You can smash down walls, you can set off a volcano which sends streams of lava into a city destroying everything in its wake, you can see the land crack and shake as an enormous earthquake is set off. They make the game world a richer, exciting, more realistic place. To see these cool effects adds so much to the overall experience of playing *B&W 2*.

PCGA: With *Black & White* you push the idea that there is a good answer and an evil answer to practically every dilemma. How do you decide what's evil, and what's good?
During the making of *Black & White* the team had many long philosophical discussions which ultimately helped us come up with a rough formula for deciding what is good and what is evil. The basic formula works like this: unprovoked aggression equals evil, retaliation is neutral, while no reaction means good. We also have a new system whereby the player can see immediately if they have done a good deed or evil deed and how this has affected their alignment. I think that you'll always find many shades of grey in *B&W 2*.

Good, or evil? That's the question *Black & White 2* directs at you, and you have to find the answer for yourself. The world has moved on from the pre-civilisations of the first game. Massive armies are now a feature, alongside the first cultures. Conflict is inevitable. Under your stewardship, your people will take over the world – but how they do this is down to you: are you evil enough to send armies to war, guaranteeing daily slaughter? Or would you prefer to build the most magnificent cities full of wonder, grace and novel technology? If you're good, you'll prefer the latter, absorbing opposing races into your own. If you're evil, grab your gigantic creature and his leash. This war is on. Your creature is your new best friend. Be it a lion-headed beast, an udder-bouncing bovine, or King Monkey, he's always there, at your right hand, following your example. He'll direct your troops into battle, or roam your cities, bestowing gifts on the populace. After all, it's no use being a god if you don't have minions to do all the boring menial work.



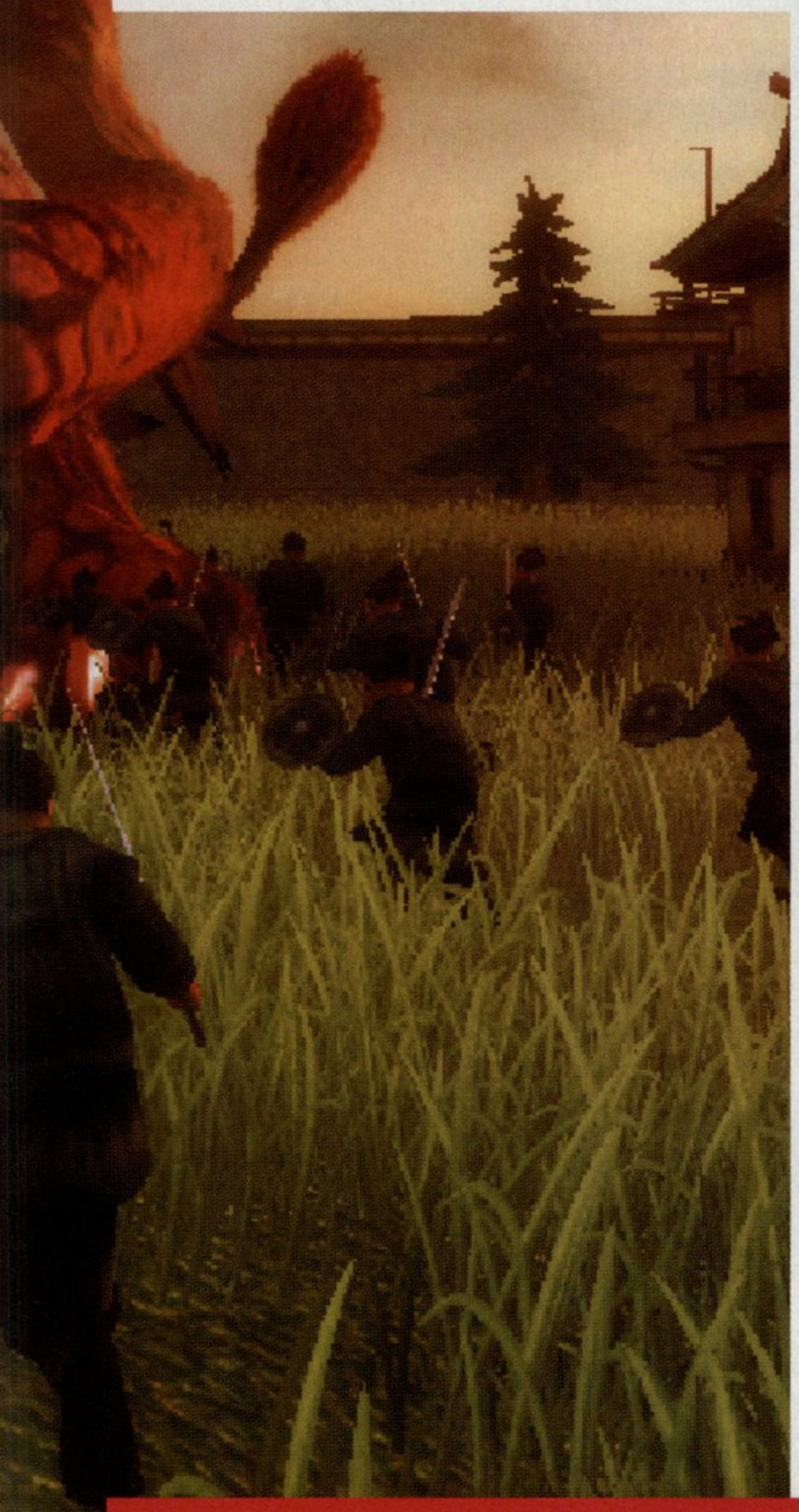
Your creature takes his cues from your actions. Set a good example.

PLAYBOY THE MANSION

■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** Cyberlore Studios ■ **ETA** March/April

You're in complete control. Of her. Yes.

Here you take 'creative control' of the titular magazine, directing photoshoots and commissioning features based on the action at the mansion. Keep the party pumping, and major celebrities will show up, giving you enough material and inspiration for the next issue. It's a tough life.



THE MOVIES

■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** Lionhead ■ **ETA** Winter

Power is an illusion. It's all done with sets, mirrors and smoke.

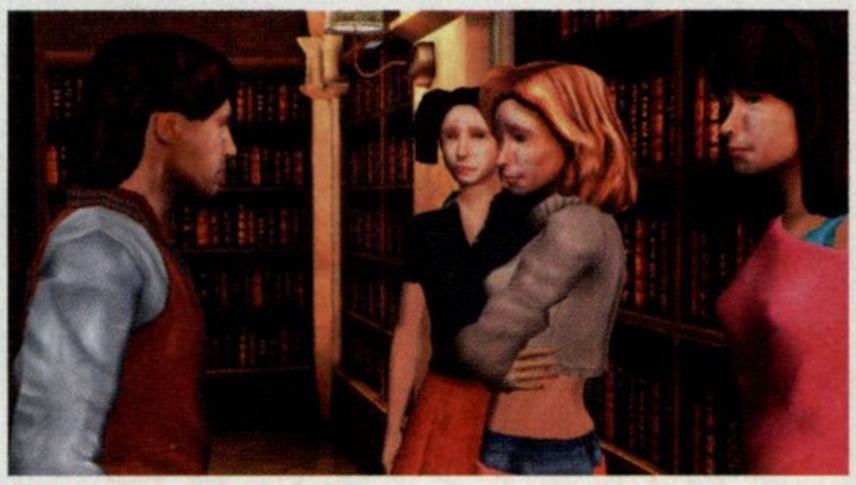
You might want to ignore the much talked-about film-making of this Peter Molyneux game for a moment, and consider this: creativity is a serious business. *The Movies* asks you to run a studio, from the early silent films of the 1920s right through to the modern day. Your company needs direction. Success is a matter of pushing your employees, and especially your stars, to ever-greater achievements: smoothing-over conflicts, rewarding success and admonishing failure. This is the next generation of management sim: leading-man management.

"I think people underestimate how difficult it is to design a great management game, to make it incredibly deep but instantly accessible," Peter Molyneux tells us. "It just isn't possible to knock out management sims in six months any more. We're trying to make a game where creating something is the centre of it."

Every star is an ego in the making. As Mr Mogul, you'll be forced to deal with all kinds of personality crises. These creative types are as demanding as you would expect: they want the world, in exchange for a few measly seconds of screen time. A-list actors have A-list demands, plush trailers, wodges of cash, groupies and booze. Can you afford to give in? These stars are marquee names. They embody pulling power. Can you afford not to give in? Do you thrust a rich tycoon's talentless (pretty) daughter as your leading lady for favours and funding, or stick to your guns and replace her with that aspiring (ugly) ingenue? After all, you're going to change someone's whole life for the better.

Or the worse. Fed up with stars whinging about pressure and "exhaustion"? When it's all too much for your charges, they'll inevitably end up hitting the bottle, ignoring the diet, and spending too much time in their trailer with the groupies. Trust them to break down in the middle of filming. Getting them back into shape means sending them into rehab, and while they're drying out, your set is in stasis, bleeding money while best-boys natter. Maybe the talent holds the power, after all. ▶

They'll inevitably end up hitting the bottle



SCRIPTED SHOOTER

Machinima fans listen up: *The Movies* is your dream studio. While it's possible to auto-generate a show reel, you can spend far longer crafting your own opus if you choose. It's a matter of choosing a script, a set, costumes and props, and manipulating a series of sliders that alter the emotional content of a scene. Place a dagger in one actor's hand, and he'll know to prick the heart of his co-star. Dress him in a comedy duck outfit and he'll understand his shame. Then, you can apply your own voice-overs, making the movie your own. "Machinima is a continuous inspiration to us," confides Peter Molyneux. "Looking at what people create from what are fairly limited resources is just amazing. We are hoping that *Movies* will give everyone better tools to make their unique movies."

›In Act of War you get a dose of C&C gaming with the CNN approach. Look for something BIG next issue...

2005 IS THE YEAR OF...

Science Fiction

After the glut of ever more realistic wargames, developers are looking outside of our own world for inspiration, casting off the shackles of reality and replacing them with pure imagination. The result is a cluster of games that fling us forward through time and space to strange new worlds. Bullets are out. Blaster bolts and ion-cannons are in.

QUAKE IV

■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** id Software/Nerve Software ■ **ETA** Summer 2005

Try to imagine *Quake III* never happened. *Quake IV* picks up the story of *Quake II*, following the defeat of the collective brain of Stroggos by one lone marine. The remaining Strogg are upset about this. Cue the fighting. For a *Quake* game, that's quite a sophisticated storyline.

According to *Quake* lore, as practised by Eric Biessman, *Quake IV*'s project lead, "the Strogg quickly regroup under a new and more powerful Makron. However, with the Strogg's planetary defences still destroyed, Earth's forces can deliver a full and final assault." That means wading through the horror of the human offal factories, re-imagined via id's *Doom 3* technology. Waste limbs and still pulsating flesh are crudely stapled to the heavy metal of the Strogg cyborgs. It's not something you want to experience alone.

You won't. *Quake IV* relies heavily on "squad dynamics". This is war, and you'll be fighting alongside a force of heavily armoured marines. Think trench warfare fused with the violence and horror of Aliens. But with a BFG.

Wading through the human offal factories

DARWINIA

■ **Publisher** Pinnacle Software ■ **Developer** Introversion ■ **ETA** March

INTERVIEW
Chris Delay, Introversion Software, on the mythology of sprites

PCGA: You mentioned when you came down to see us that the first thing you made was the technology test, which had hundreds of the little stick men pouring out of space. When you were programming that, did you have any idea of the backstory of these men?

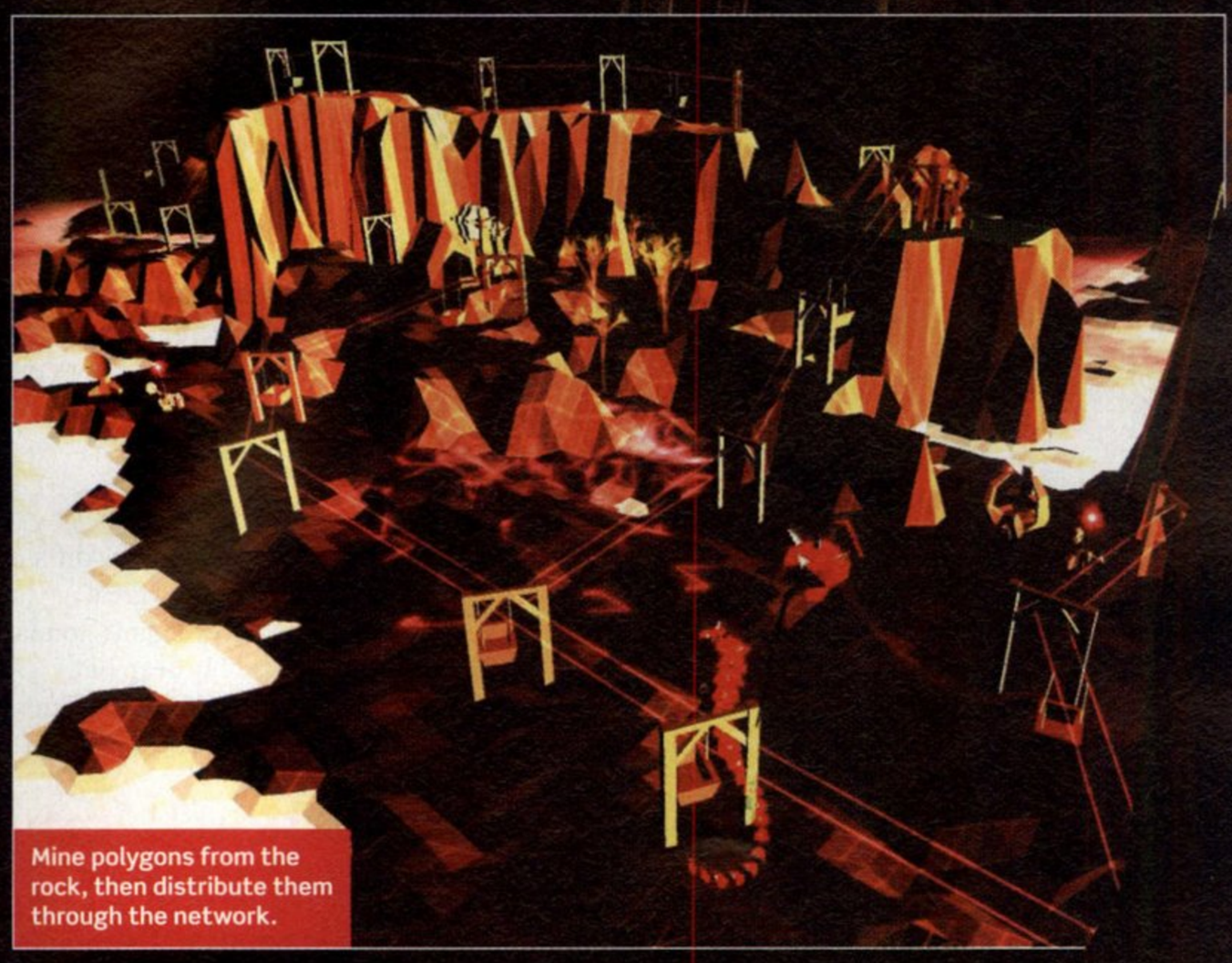
What you see now is actually the third major revision of the project, and it's completely different to the first two attempts. The first version didn't even have the stickmen... it used sprites borrowed from Doom, which we were planning to eventually replace. The second version had the stickmen that eventually became the Darwinians, but it was a multiplayer wargame, and it played a bit like a messed up RTS. We hit on the retro look after about a year's worth of experimentation, and that's when it actually started to come together. The process of designing the world and the back-story has been extremely evolutionary, with us regularly trying things and then chucking them away, slowly evolving what you see now.

PCGA: You're trying to build character in these little chaps. I remember being entranced by the Darwinian funeral rites... Why do you put that kind of detail into the game?

Doesn't it just give them so much character? The idea is that tens of thousands of generations of Darwinians have existed before the current bunch, so they've got all this history and all these rituals and stories that they tell each other. The very first Darwinians saw the world being built by Dr Sepulveda, and stories of that formed the basis of their primitive religion. They know about the souls at the centre of every living thing, and they know these souls eventually return to the centre of the world and are reborn as new Darwinians. So they've built up all these beliefs about their god, and the afterlife, most of which aren't far from the truth.

The specific idea behind the funeral candles was that they want to help to guide the spirits back to heaven, because it's a dangerous and difficult road and spirits sometimes get lost along the way. So they send these candles up as guides to light the way. When the Darwinians do this it's like they're telling you a story through their actions, telling you something about their world and their way of life, that would take Dr Sepulveda several paragraphs to say verbally, and wouldn't be nearly as touching. I think little things like that add so much depth by implying generations of beliefs and stories.

Another reason was that I was bored. Working on games for such long time periods means that sometimes you get a bit sick of it, drop whatever you should be doing, and write something that's a bit more fun.



Mine polygons from the rock, then distribute them through the network.

When the chips are down, call in the sprites. *Darwinia* is set in a virtual world existing within a network of ancient videogame consoles, under attack by a strange virus. The programs, the Darwinians, are helpless to deal with the assault, so the network's creator, a Clive Sinclair figure named Dr Sepulveda, asks you to organise a defence. It's a twisted RTS, where you control individual units to blast your way through, or just order a bunch of them to take and hold a single position.

And it's beautiful. This virtual world is full of individual details, from the cloud of lost Darwinian souls that hover over the battlefields, to the intricate logic of the levels. Mine complexes with box-cars drag raw polygons out of the rock. Remote shack-like safe-havens house refugee sprites. It's approaching art; in Introversion's own words "a digital dreamscape."

LEGO STAR WARS

■ **Publisher** Eidos ■ **Developer** Giant Interactive Software ■ **ETA** April

Happy plastic, it's fantastic. LEGO Star Wars strives to combine the impulse to experiment with the spectacle of the movies. Guide your heroes through the classic scenes, chopping battle-droids in half with a toy lightsaber.

INTERVIEW
Jonathan Smith, Development Director, Giant Interactive Software, on bobble-heads and lightsabers

PCGA: Just holding Star Wars LEGO makes me feel happy. How on earth do you translate that feeling into a videogame?

Having worked with LEGO for years, I know that the more you try to pick apart and explain that special feeling, the more you obscure its simple joy. There are all kinds of qualities that we draw from our feelings for LEGO – and we use words like playfulness, creativity, experimentation, surprise, quality and mischief to describe them – but they each point only indirectly to that essential experience. Everything we do has to be measured against that.

PCGA: Is it strange, working with characters that have limitations in the way they bend?

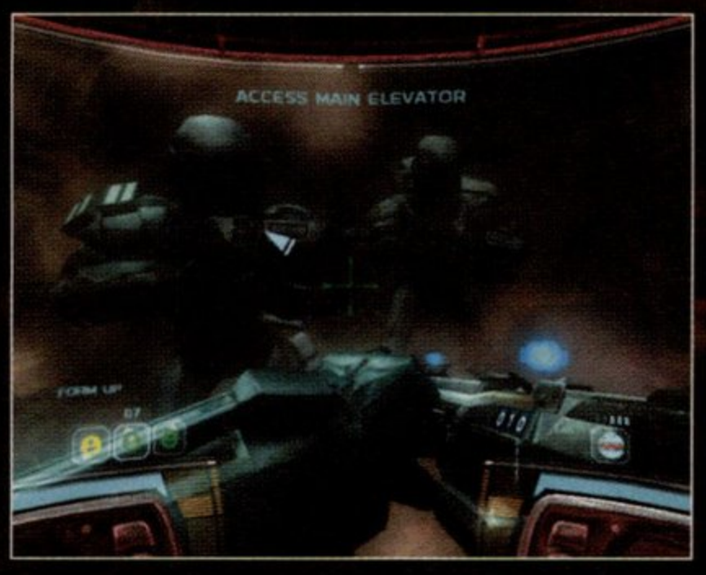
There's no plastic in this game. It's a LEGO Star Wars world, the world of your imagination, brought to life. And that world plays by its own unique rules. So, yes, our animation is founded upon principles of fluidity and athleticism. You can pull off the most amazing jumps, and tumbles, and amazing lightsaber combo attacks, with ease – because how else would it feel to be a Jedi?

PCGA: Can you explain a little bit how 'the Force' works in game?

When it comes to Force powers, in our LEGO Star Wars world, the Force can do all kinds of things. As well as Force-Pushing enemies, and Force-Throwing objects, you can take things apart, move them and rebuild them in a cool new LEGO way. It's a fantastic power which everyone loves playing with.

REPUBLIC COMMANDO

■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** LucasArts ■ **ETA** March



Cross the squad combat of the Tom Clancy series of games with a darker take on the infantry battles at the end of Attack of the Clones, and you'll get close to *Republic Commando*. It's cleverer than it might first appear, requiring tactical prowess to progress through its Episode 3-inspired levels.

PROJECT SNOWBLIND

■ **Publisher** Eidos ■ **Developer** Crystal Dynamics ■ **ETA** March

Once rumoured to be set in the *Deus Ex* 'universe', *Snowblind* is a frantic first-person shooter that wears that influence well. You play a bio-augmented super-soldier, fighting against the forces of oppression. Best of all are your 'intelligent weapons': homing bullets and clouds of carnivorous drones.

STARSHIP TROOPERS

■ **Publisher** Empire ■ **Developer** Strangelite ■ **ETA** July

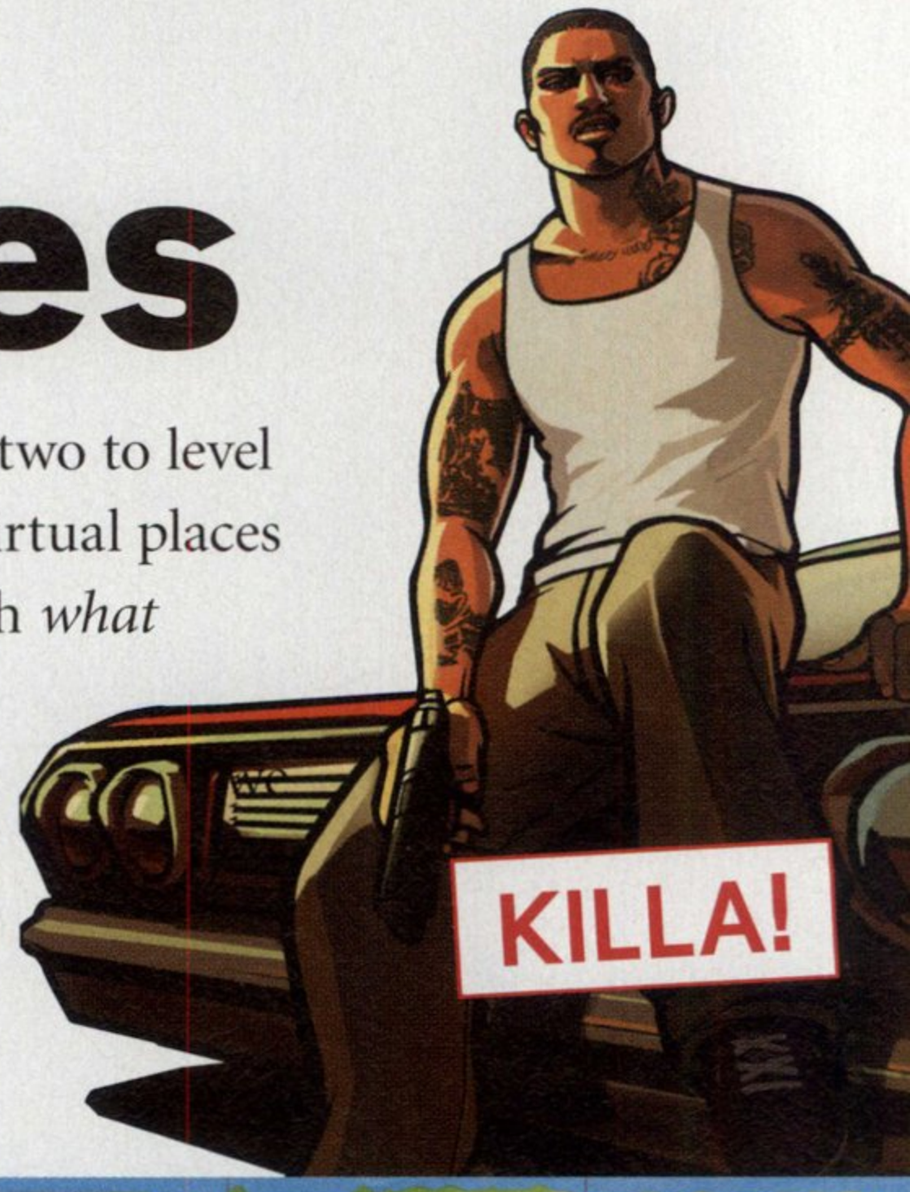
Whiskey Outpost, that incredible ambush in the movie, is the perfect template for *Starship Troopers* the game. Expect hundreds of bugs charging at the walls, clambering over their own corpses to reach the human meat manning the defences. You'll even have to face the enormous fire-bugs – single-handedly. ▶

› While Xbox owners delight in the online mayhem of **Halo 2** we're left waiting for news of a PC release. We're certain it's going to happen, but the MS minions are keeping quiet.

2005 IS THE YEAR...

We go places

The traditional progression of a game, from level one to level two to level end to game over, is falling by the wayside. Now we explore virtual places at our own pace. Developers are no longer just concerned with *what* you're doing – they care about where and why you do it. No longer do we take a linear route from start to end – gamers go where we choose, when we choose.



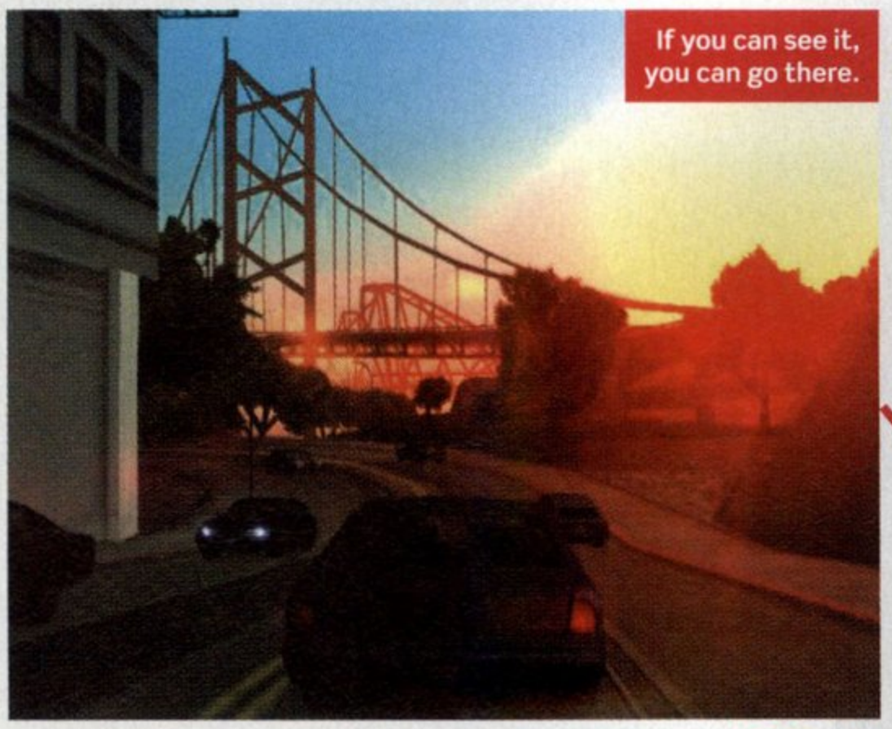
GTA: SAN ANDREAS

■ **Publisher** Rockstar ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **ETA** June

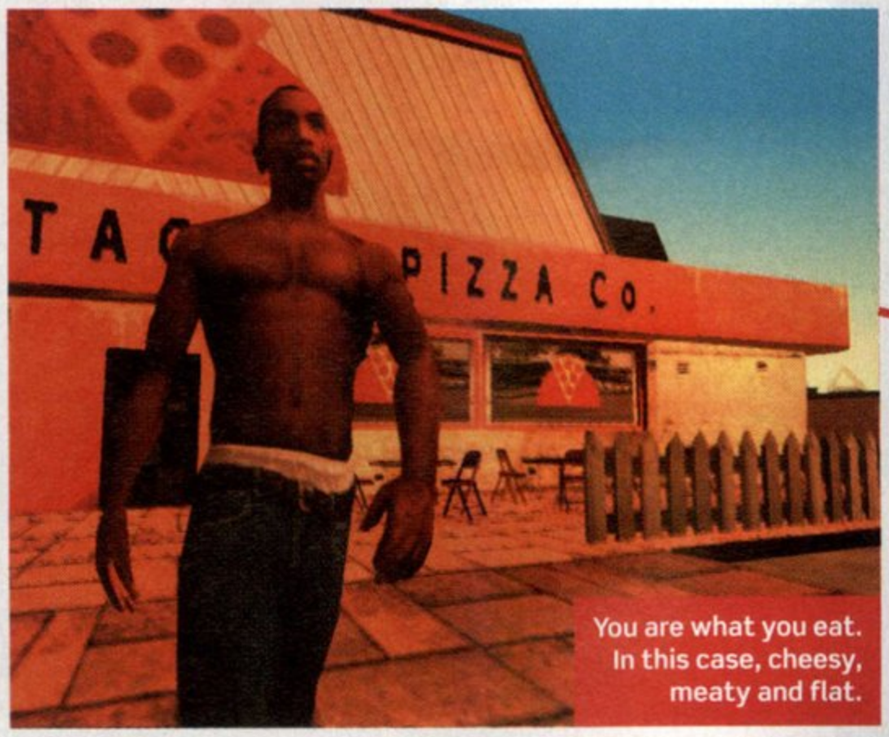
Vice City veterans are in for a shock. *San Andreas* is a major leap forward from the '80s gangster epic: a vicious crime simulator rather than an overt parody/comedic driving game. In the opening stages, you delight in cracking the skulls of crack dealers, waging vicious gang warfare, butchering innocent pedestrians and… shopping.

At a stroke, *GTA* has turned into an RPG. Stats rule: every action is reflected by a change in your leading man: CJ. He starts as a fresh-faced almost-innocent, fumbling with guns, barely able to hold his own. A couple of sessions down at the local gym, and he's bulked up, muscles rippling through his string vest. A few bank-jobs later, and his pistol-play has the air of a studied assassin. A pinstripe suit, Cuban heels and smart barnet complete the look. The young hustler becomes king bee.

It all happens within the context of a *place*. Three cities, to be exact. Drive from one end of the world to the other, and watch the architecture change. Suburbs are swallowed by sky-rise. Executive properties overlook the city with views to die for. Leave the city, and you'll find small towns in the countryside, all rednecks, lumberjack shirts and combine harvesters. You'll spend hours just exploring this new world. *San Andreas* isn't just a game. It's a place to visit.

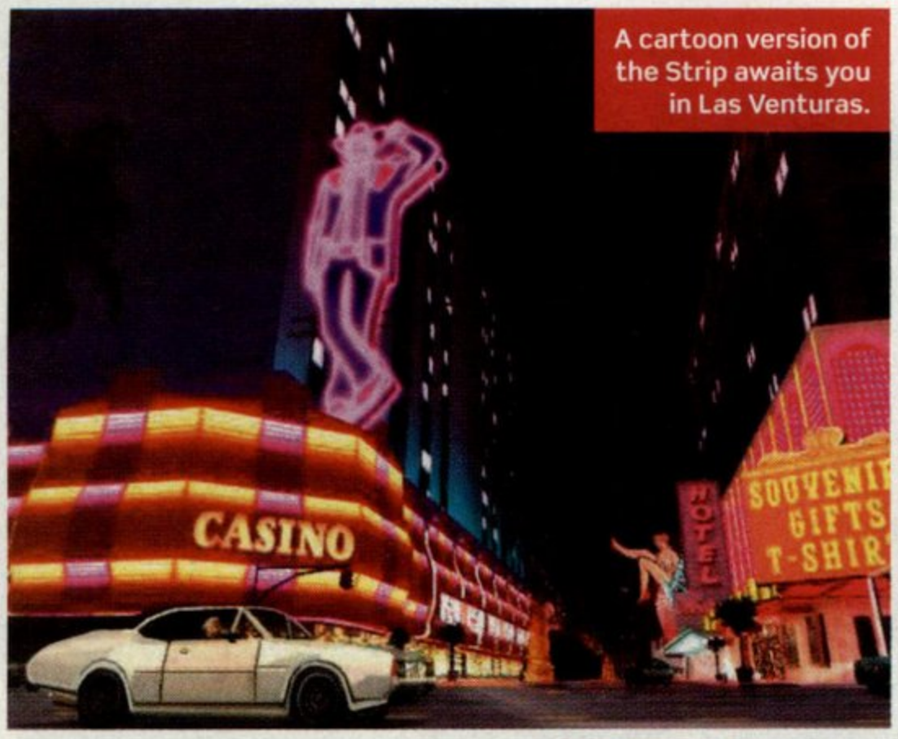

If you can see it, you can go there.

SAN FIERO Inspired by San Francisco
Beside the obvious hippy overtones of "Hashbury" sit the twin terrors of urban gentrification (witness the yuppie district of Doherty) and a thriving drug import/export business. The beautiful Gant Bridge might dominate the shorefront skyline, but the massive narcotic refineries are where you'll want to spend your time.



You are what you eat. In this case, cheesy, meaty and flat.

LOS SANTOS Inspired by Los Angeles
Draped in a sickly orange curtain of smog, *LS* is your hometown. To make your mark, you'll need to gussy up to the Vinewood elite, while waging war on local gangs and 'wet' dealers (look it up). This opening area is grittier than anything we've seen in a *GTA* game. Kitsch violence is out, rude words and 100% uncut drug references are in.



A cartoon version of the Strip awaits you in Las Venturas.

LAS VENTURAS Inspired by Las Vegas

Keep an eye out for the Elvis impersonators wandering around the many casinos, or putting on shows along the Strip. Explore beyond the city limits and you may even come across a *GTA*-ised Area 51. Gambling your earnings in casinos is one way to while away the time, but clever gang-bangers will put a deposit down on the place.

THE MATRIX ONLINE

■ **Publisher** Sega ■ **Developer** Monolith ■ **ETA** Autumn

"Can we stop fighting for just a moment, and find out where we are?"

The Matrix Online's newspaper, The Sentinel, demonstrates some of the length the developers are going to to convince you that this is a real (virtual) world. It's written by the blue-pills – those who've yet to wake from their cyber-coma. As players explore the new peace between human and machine, events are reported in the paper. How will the unenlightened make sense of high-wire street-fighting and slow motion gun battles?

You play as a red-pill, unleashed upon a four-region ultratropolis (based on the city of the films), fighting scary agents and the strange sentient programs that make this world their home. Major moments in the unfolding story are to be emphasised through

dynamic architecture; expect themes and events brought up in cutscenes to be reflected in freshly painted graffiti and newly flattened buildings.

ELDER SCROLLS IV

■ **Publisher** TBA ■ **Developer** Bethesda ■ **ETA** Late 2005

Can Bethesda maintain this level of detail throughout an entire world?

The open-ended role-playing game of choice for PC GAMES ADDICT is *Morrowind*. Why? Because we can go anywhere, do bribe/slay/help anyone and sell hallucinogenic drugs to cats. That's exactly the spirit developer Bethesda are aiming to recapture in this lush sequel, crafting a fantasy-inspired world of the same magnificent scale and beauty. This is the perfect setting for an adventure, free of rules and restrictions. *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* is no longer about where you're going. It's about wreaking mischief along the way.

The Spy Says...

What's going on behind the scenes of *Warhammer Online*? Climax and Games Workshop, the two names behind the game, may officially have cancelled the game, but The Spy knows that work continues. With good reason: the chance to look behind the paint and plastic and explore the world of Warhammer is an appealing prospect. Traditional MMO gamers should also consider exploring the forthcoming world of *Vanguard: Saga of Heroes*. Its pedigree is first class, with many of the minds from *EverQuest* contributing to its traditional, orc-infested environment. *Vanguard* will be a place where the daily grind matters. ▶

› Expect more details on **Star Trek Online** and Garriot's **Tabula Rasa** in the new year › **Guild Wars**, an MMO for casual gamers, will be released soon.

Games make history

Developers have always looked to the past for inspiration. This has always created a conflict. How do you respect history, while letting players enjoy themselves? 2005 brings with it a realisation that fun can be created simply through accuracy. Authenticity is entertaining in itself. Gearbox, the developers of *Brothers in Arms,* are quick to distance themselves from the idea of a 'playable documentary', but the idea is growing. Soon, PC Games will allow us to play history.

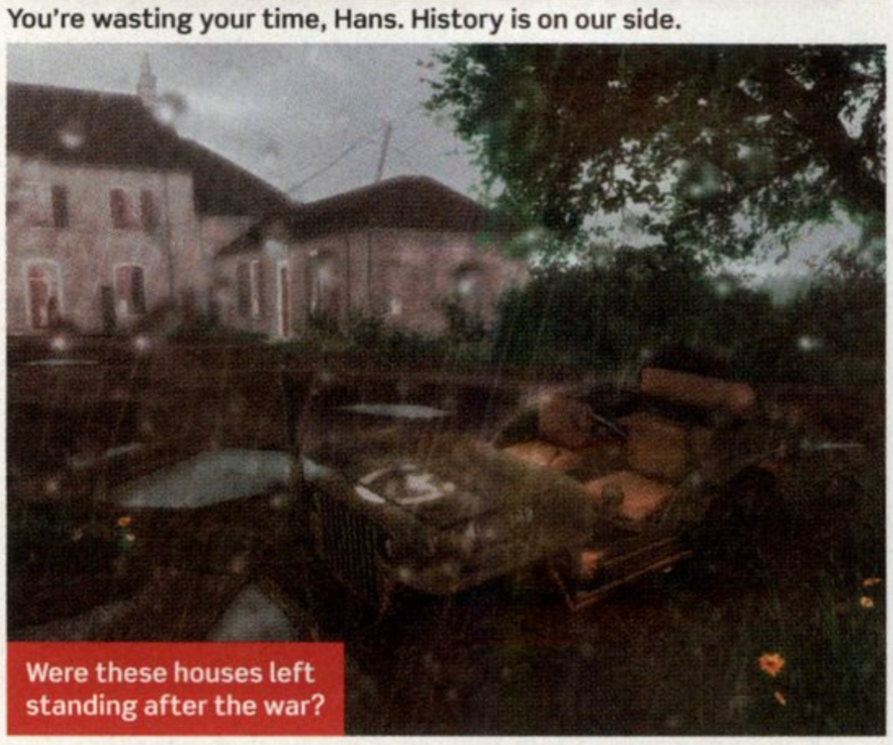
BROTHERS IN ARMS

■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** Gearbox ■ **ETA** February/March

What's the major difference between *Brothers in Arms* and the battalion's worth of other WWII first-person shooters out there? It's a simulation, at heart, a simulation of squad level infantry tactics, put into practice during a specific place and time, by specific soldiers. You're responsible for a platoon of infantry during the first moments of the Normandy landings, assaulting Carentan. You don't simply shoot – this is a game where you direct one fire-team into position, ordering them to pin down one group of enemies, flanking them with another. Fire and manoeuvre, fire and manoeuvre. It's about adapting, using the top-down 'situational awareness view' to improvise tactics. Use that shelter to move forward. Take up position at that hedgerow. Use that barn as cover. Avoid that machinegun nest.

Then it hits you: every situation you face has a grounding in reality. These are the same infantry battles, over the same terrain, that the troops faced in 1944. You're making the same ground-level tactical decisions, in the same theatre, as the veterans.

You're wasting your time, Hans. History is on our side.



Were these houses left standing after the war?

Some of the character faces are based on WWII veterans.

As Randy Pitchford, Gearbox Software's CEO explains. "We pretty much rebuilt the 101st Airborne's invasion area as it was in 1944. We got a hold of the real 1944 Aerial Reconnaissance images and used those as layout guides. Then we actually walked the grounds ourselves, so our artists could see the topography, and cross-referenced the four or five thousand photos we took with the several thousand US Army Signal Corps photos from 1944 that we recovered from the US National Archives." The result: a virtual battlefield.

"A really fun thing to do is we let someone who's never been to Normandy play one of the missions over and over again – you know, really spend some time in the place," says Randy. "After he's done playing we show him a picture of the area from 1944. Then we ask... 'OK, you've never been to Normandy, but you recognise this house in this picture. You know where this picture was taken.' They think about it and they realise that they know the place as if they've been there – as if they've been to 1944 Normandy. The trick, of course, is that they *have* been there. The game took them."

Randy also has a confession to make. His team are gun nuts. "A bunch of our guys go to the gun range that's about two blocks down from our office at least once a week. That's one of the advantages to having a no-joke Colonel on your staff full time and living in the state of Texas. These weapons are just amazing. I remember

SILENT HUNTER 3

■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** Strategic Simulations ■ **ETA** Winter 2005

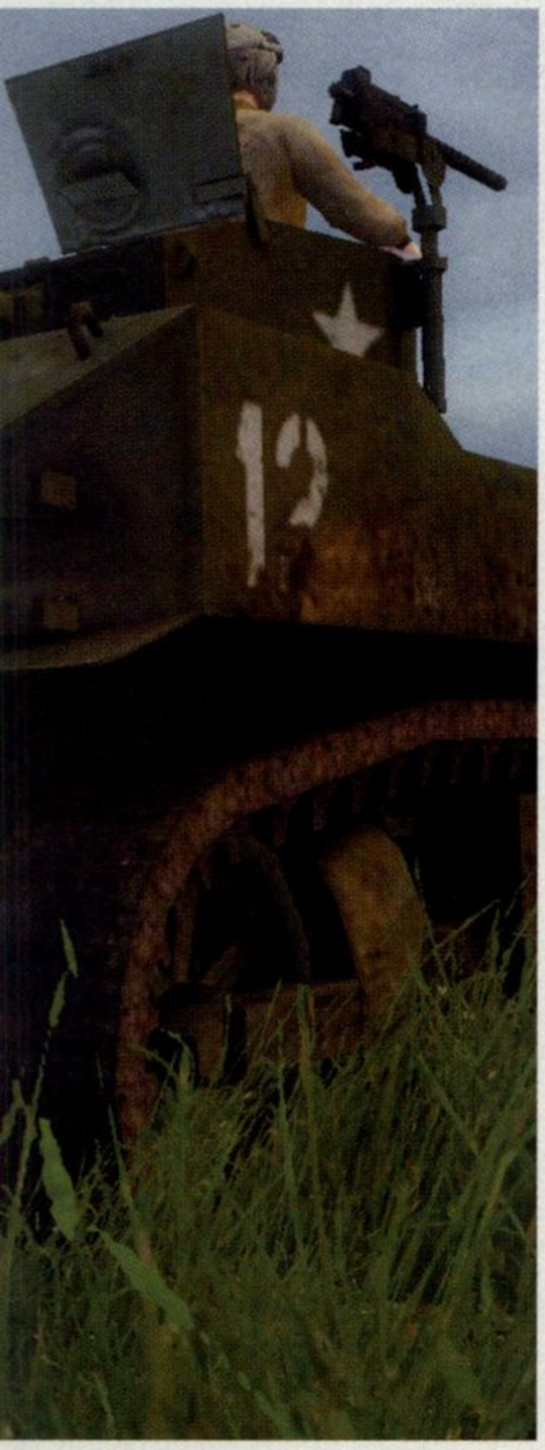
A well armoured escort craft. The wolf-pack shall avoid this.

Talk about putting Das Boot in. Take command of a U-boat in the Battle for the Atlantic, hunting merchant convoys and avoiding destroyers. Tricking sonar, forcing escorts to chase fake contacts are all approved tactics for senior Wolfpack commanders. Managing your crew is key: assembling repair teams in times of crisis, forcing them to work at whisper. But you can't stay down there forever – the developers even model carbon dioxide poisoning from the crews' breath.

BATTLESTATIONS: MIDWAY

■ **Publisher** SCi ■ **Deveoper** Mithis Games ■ **ETA** Autumn 2005

Take your single seater fighter craft...



INTERVIEW
Randy Pitchford chats about soldiers... "A common theme with these guys is that they tended to not be afraid of getting hit. Dying wasn't the thing they worried about most. The thing they were most terrified about was letting their buddies down. It was like they could handle the idea of dying as long as they knew they were going to be brave and courageous for the guy next to them. One veteran we talked to spoke of how after setting up their defence and waiting for the enemy to hit them, he prayed that he would be brave for the other guys in his squad. Think about that... He wasn't thinking, "Please let me make it through this." He was thinking, "Please let me be the guy who can put my life on the line for the guy next to me." That kind of thing is what we mean by brotherhood.

when Brian Martel (art director, co-director) and I first fired an M1 Garand. The first thing he noticed right off the bat was how our focus shifted down range and that the sight up close was blurry. It was simply impossible to keep both things in view. I heard our audio director talking to another guy on the team for over an hour about the subtlety of the report when a shot is fired or how each of the different weapons chimed when the empty magazine prevented the weapon from charging. The input programmer was all excited about how each weapon tended to force different kinds of balance..."

The result is a game that moves everyone, from gamers to real-life soldiers. It respects the subject matter. Randy himself is in awe of those who fought. "We worry about the veterans so much. These guys are better than us. They are so humble, but they know how important what they did was... One of the guys we talked to was just so honoured and thankful for what we were doing. He was actually in Fox Company 502 PIR – the unit the game is about – and fought with them for all their engagements in WWII. He's the real deal, a decorated soldier with a purple heart and *two* Bronze Stars in combat with a 'V' added to the medal for Valour. When I learned about what he had actually done I wanted to just give the man my wallet and go curl up in the corner until the sense of unworthiness passed. He was one of the guys who made our today, you know. We were really frightened to get his approval – we were afraid he was going to say 'Well, I appreciate the effort, kid, but you just don't get it.' What happened was just unbelievable. He said that he couldn't believe what he saw, that his imagination was getting ahead of him. His exact words: 'It's just like going back in time.'"

We were really frightened to get his approval

... and drop several kilotonnes worth of C5 on enemy carriers.

The war in the Pacific heats up in this sizzling naval action game. Drive submarines, aircraft carriers, attack boats and kamikaze fighters, island-hopping to your eventual destination, the Japanese heartland. This is a simulation of massive scope, replaying the Battle for Midway from the perspective of hundreds of soldiers. Expect weather patterns to put a crimp on your ambitions: launching bombers in a storm is one thing, but flying them through the eye of a hurricane is quite another.

Chalk that one up to Fritz.

The Spy Says...

Fresh from the success of *IL-2 Sturmovik* and *Pacific Fighters*, Maddox Games are building the foundations of the ultimate WWII flight-sim, *Battle of Britain*. Authentic models of Spitfires and Messerschmidts are complemented by an outstanding damage model. These crates will crumble in *style*. ▶

› Expect details on **Call of Duty 2** in the new year› **Sniper: Elite**, the assassination sim set in Berlin during the final days of World War II will also be released in 2005...

2005 IS THE YEAR...

We play together

At last, co-op gaming – where you share with a friend experiences framed by a story – is coming of age. Multiplayer will no longer be about how highly your score ranks on a table. In 2005, multiplayer is not about the winning. It's about the taking part. Together.

SWAT 4

■ **Publisher** Vivendi ■ **Developer** Irrational Software ■ **ETA** April

"This is SWAT team Alpha. We have the perp in custody. Over and out. Krrk. Book him, Danno."

"Who are you talking to? Who's Danno? And stop making funny noises."

"Sorry. Just getting into it."

You would too, if you got the chance to take part in the flashbang-heavy police raids that make up *SWAT 4*. Assuming the role of the ultimate in law enforcement officers entails more than just shooting evil-doers in the head. You actually need to arrest them. We know! Incredible!

Not content with that next-to-astonishing revelation, developers Irrational are making big noises about the co-operative mode. You and friends get to creep through the urban decay of a fictional American city, using your knowledge of police best-practice to bust dealers, drug dens and psycho hideouts. Even when you're intimately familiar with the geography of your target, through repeated play, the missions are designed to randomise much of the crims' personality. Will they be cowed by you and your team-mates shining flashlights into their eyes? Or will you have to resort to wet work, calling in snipers from outside to deal with the lunatic threats through the next doorway?

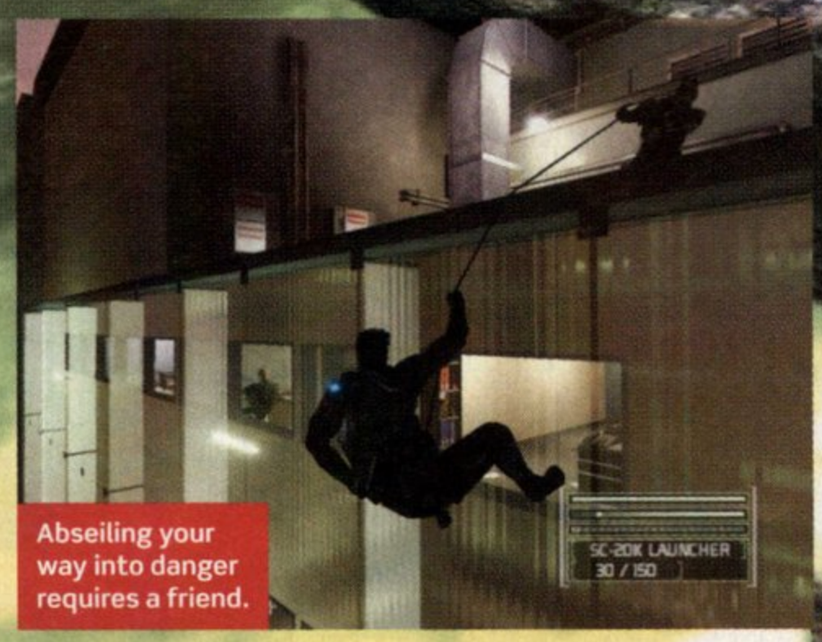
SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **ETA** March

The co-operative missions in the third *Splinter Cell* game are an adjunct to the singleplayer – they're integrated into the storyline, but you won't *have* to complete them to earn your spy spurs. You and a friend will infiltrate locked-down merc encampments, using each other's bodies to gain entry. That's as shifty as it sounds. To get over a tall wall, one spy puts his back against it, drops his knee, and boosts his partner upwards. Then, he turns, and uses his friend as a ladder, clambering up onto his back, and onto the top.

Working together opens up new opportunities. Why blast your way into a room when you can get your partner to dangle you, from a skylight, by your legs? Why clear a path for your friend when you can simply clamber onto a roof, then drop a rope, and let him quietly climb into position?

Sam Fisher lives in world of deceit, double cross, and pointy sticks. It's a place where you need every friend you can get your hands on. If that friend shares a love of black rubber, so much the better.



Abseiling your way into danger requires a friend.

2005 IS THE YEAR...

That stories truly matter

Unique talents are making their skills felt across the industry, telling stories that are mature and dark, yet tap into that a sense of play that only games can give. At Obsidian, Chris Avalone, famed for the twisted *Planescape: Torment*, dabbles in Star Wars lore. For Funcom, Ragnar Tornquist explores the power of dreams in the sequel to the much loved *Longest Journey*.

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC 2: THE SITH LORDS

■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** LucasArts/Obsidan ■ **ETA** February

The original *KotOR* showed the world that storytelling in games was as much up to the player as to the designer. How you approached the game's morality changed the outcome – did you join the Light or Dark side? Were you affected by the emotional pleas and conflicts within your party? Did you care?

That's a central tenet of *The Sith Lords*. You play the last Jedi, some four thousand years pre-Lucas. You are target number one for the Sith, in a galaxy shaped by the choices you made in the original game. There's a greater focus on your Force powers, however: they're 'switched on' immediately, meaning that you're free to Force Push and Persuade your way around the galaxy from the very beginning.

But it's the story that matters, and from Obsidian we expect nothing less than magnificence. Your character walks a narrow line between good and evil – a prime target for conversion to the Dark side, yet entirely redeemable in the eyes of the Jedi masters. Mysteries remain. What is this new character doing with the Ebon Hawk? What was the fate of Dantooine post-*KotOR*? And will you be able to resist the lure of Dark Force powers like Force Crush, which allows you to telekinetically raise an opponent into the air, before pressing them into a football sized space-hole, in the face of constant criticism from your do-gooder party?

DREAMFALL

■ **Publisher** Micro Application ■ **Developer** Funcom ■ **ETA** Spring

This is about the power of imagination. In *The Longest Journey*, April Ryan adventured in two alternate universes, each of which offered a different avenue for humanity. The massive industrialisation and free-market capitalism of Stark, or the fantasyland of Arcadia, where magic was an everyday occurrence, causing seismic rifts and massive collapse.

Tornquist returns to the same themes in this sequel, simultaneously exploring the flaws in his characters. Zoe Castillo, a bio-engineering student, is caught in a massive conspiracy while taking time out from her degree. Kian's entire life is devoted to his mistress: he's at once a fanatic, soldier assassin and an apostle. April is now disillusioned, trapped in another world and trying to come to terms with her new life.

All three characters will be offered greater freedom of action than ever in these vividly realised worlds. Don't worry about finding keys to locked doors: just kick them in with your size eights. ▶

2005 IS THE YEAR...

We're afraid of the dark

Whether they're riffing off comical fairground ghost trains or the edgier horror of cinema, games have always had the capacity to scare. It's a genre where videogames frequently out-class cinema. As Tim Willits says below: it's always scarier when it's happening to *you*, when you see it through your own eyes. In 2005, terror combines with the latest graphics technology to truly terrify us. Just what is lurking in those immaculately rendered shadows?

DOOM 3 RESURRECTION OF EVIL

■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** id Software/Nerve Software ■ **ETA** March

Back on Mars, something wicked is stirring. Blame the UAC – after the closing of the Hell Portal, the all-encompassing import/export/planetary domination corporation declare that the Alpha Base has been obliterated, with no survivors. Yes, no survivors, not even the soulcube-bearing hero from the last game. When a faint radio signal is detected coming from Site 1, the unexplored archaeological dig, a team led by Dr Elizabeth McNeil is sent to investigate. You play a combat engineer, roped-in to watch over the scientists. Cue the lights.

Along the way, you'll discover the 'Plasma Levitator', *Doom*'s equivalent of *Half-Life 2*'s gravity gun (useful for plucking impish fireballs from the air) and the double-barrelled shotgun, lifted straight from *Doom 2*. Line up a row of zombies, wait until you see the blacks of their souls, then let 'em have it.

IMPISH!

INTERVIEW
Tim Willits, lead designer on *Doom 3*

PCGA: How do you approach a subject as challenging as scaring a player?
A lot of it's down to pacing. We try to set up a crescendo, maybe it starts with you walking down this corridor, and you can have a little witch girl talking, alongside an ambient sound effect, almost like music that gradually builds up. Nothing will actually happen for a while, we just leave you in suspense, then, as you're coming to the end of the section, you alter the environment, giving the player something that they're not prepared for. We don't want to be too predictable, or too obvious.

PCGA: Are these the same techniques that film-makers use, or are there ideas that are game specific?
With movies, you know, you sympathise with the main character, and when bad things happen, it happens to them. In computer games, you don't have to sympathise. It's just you. Giving players a little jump or a-giving them a little bit of a jerk is actually a little easier. They're not just watching, a spectator, they're there in the game. It's much more scary if you're in control, when you're not sitting back having a passive experience. There's another difference. Computer games, particularly first-person shooters, let the player control the camera. Even though we're directing the game, we don't control what the player sees. That means we have to think and predict what the player's behaviour is going to be when approaching a certain situation, how they're going to react. We have to examine where they're going to be looking, if something big and scary happens but they don't see it, then it's completely lost. So, getting people to feel these emotions of terror and fright is a matter of forcing them to see the *really* terrifying stuff.

That's actually something that's much easier to do with the *Doom 3* technology. So much depends on the atmosphere – you're always uneasy because you can't see everything. Even if there's nothing lurking in the shadows, the fact that the shadows are there, and you don't know what's in them, makes it terrifying.

PCGA: As designers, do you prefer playing with the psychological state of the player rather than just making them jump?
I think it's important to mix the two. The smaller, scripted knock backs and scares work much better when you get inside people's

F.E.A.R.

■ **Publisher** Vivendi ■ **Developer** Monolith ■ **ETA** Winter

"You've got some, thing, err, just under... that's it, a bit higher"

Already demonstrates a mastery of horror

Little red-riding hood is coming for you. The *F.E.A.R.* team are a group of first strike, genetically engineered soldiers, dropped into combat with a group of paramilitaries who've taken control of an office block. The hostages and the first rescue party get ripped limb from limb. You're sent in to find out by whom. And why does a little girl in a blood-red coat keep popping up on the grainy security footage?

F.E.A.R. is already demonstrating a mastery of the art of horror. Every opportunity is taken to put you off guard, be it electrical interference in your H.U.D., strange shadows playing off the walls, or bizarre movements behind frosted glass. Pacing is everything. You move from out-and-out firefights with cloaked ninjas, slowing time when you get up close to land a few punches and high kicks. Then time slows *right* down. Suddenly, you're bombarded by flashing lights and screeching electric noise. Be afraid.

Line up a row of zombies, wait 'til you see the blacks of their souls, then let 'em have it

BIOSHOCK

■ **Publisher** TBA ■ **Developer** Irrational ■ **ETA** Summer 2005

The big question: will we fight a bio-engineered Hitler clone?

This 'spiritual successor' to the terrifying *System Shock 2* finds you exploring an abandoned Nazi bunker retrofitted as a biological research lab. Re-engineering your own DNA, you'll be able to grant yourself immunity to fire and fight genetically-warped, mutant horrors. Utilising the lab's biological controls, you'll be able to exploit the creeping bads' weak points.

The Spy Says...

Set aboard a Russian whaling ship, set adrift in a storm on the Bering Sea, *Cold Fear* already sounds chilling. You'll fend off humans, near humans, and anti-humans against a backdrop of ice-cold oceans, creaking bows, and the occasional rubber dingy. If you haven't had your fill of playing with physics after *Half-Life 2*, consider *Second Sight*. This time, your mind does the moving – you're blessed with tele and pyro-kinesis, able to fling tables and fireballs at errant scientists. How will you cope with the ability to instantly combust the enemy soldiers? ▶

› **In Memoriam** veterans received an email this month, requesting their help to decrypt a further CD deposited by a serial killer. That means **In Memoriam 2** is on its way.

2005 IS THE YEAR...

Of the 20 sided dice

PC games have always found inspiration in the world and rules of Dungeons & Dragons. The greatest RPGs, from *Baldur's Gate* and *Planescape: Torment*, right back to the *Ultima* and *Elder Scrolls* series, are directly influenced by the tabletop game's ability to create epic adventure from simple rules. 2005 offers a bumper crop of D&D-inspired material.

DRAGONSHARD

■ **Publisher** Atari ■ **Developer** Liquid Entertainment ■ **ETA** Autumn

The roots of D&D are in wargaming and the use of miniatures to simulate massed battles. The focus on single heroes came later. *Dragonshard* will attempt to re-unite the two, enabling players to manage armies and fight major battles on the surface of Eberron, the latest official D&D world, while sending individual troops down into the underground to secure treasure, bonus materials, and secret passages. Battles above are fought as a typical RTS: you build bases, churn out units, and send them forth to do battle. If you're not willing to sacrifice them on the battlefield, you can send them to the underground. Play then transforms into a dungeon crawl, the same troops that have served so well in battle fight individual combats, disarm traps, clear subterranean caverns and defeat massive boss creatures. Veterans of such underground exploration become heroes, useful in rallying the troops above ground, and vice-versa. In multiplayer, this relationship is exploited to the fullest. If one player rules the over-ground, that doesn't mean another can't attack from below, rallying heroes from the deep into ferocious overground assaults.

INTERVIEW
Jasen Torres, Designer of *Dragonshard*, on D20 rolls.

PCGA: Why do the D&D worlds and rule-set make for such rich, interesting games?
I think there are probably a wide variety of reasons. It was one of the first fantasy setting games, so its exposure to people who might grow up and make games was pretty high. In addition it had really interesting and memorable worlds, and it created a great canvas for active imaginations. D&D's monster manuals and stories were cool even to people who didn't play.

They have much of the world fleshed out with histories, lore, and personality, while still leaving enough room to adventure in those places without 'messing everything up'. Since the tabletop games were developed with the idea that the end player would make their own rules off of the D&D base, it is very flexible. On top of that, I think its ease of use, while proving to be deep in strategy, also lends flavour to videogames. A system that wasn't as deep probably wouldn't fare as well in a format where the player has dozens of battles in a play session instead of just one or two.

PCGA: Do you have to be entirely faithful to D&D when designing *Dragonshard*?
I think we have to be as faithful to D&D as we can while still making a fun and engaging game for the player. An easy example is the rules for D&D abilities and spell-casting. The challenge is to remain faithful by having cool spells like magic missile and fireball but to adapt them so they work within the context of the Real-Time Strategy game, and are ultimately fun to use. We've had to do this for elements like spells and abilities. *Dragonshard* is a Real-Time Strategy game – there is no concept of spells or abilities per day. It would not be very fun to play a wizard character unit that ran out of his magic missile spell and could not cast another one until the next day, especially when there won't be another day in that multiplayer game.

PCGA: Does the process you use for creating characters bear any resemblance to D&D's?
Definitely! While we may not bother with hit dice or skill points, we definitely take race, class, and alignment into consideration when making any Champion, Captain, or Regular. In fact, every single Champion is a core D&D class like Wizard, Rogue, Fighter, or Cleric. On top of that, nearly every Captain unit is a D&D class as well.

Two heads are better than one, for crushing dwarves underfoot.

The underground peons aren't going to give up their gold too easily.

Keep an eye out for firestorms.

DUNGEON SIEGE 2

■ **Publisher** Microsoft ■ **Developer** Gas Powered Games ■ **ETA** Autumn

Can *Dungeon Siege 2* match the mule-driving, orc-bashing original?

We never tire of parties. *Dungeon Siege 2* is a celebration of that: once again we're fighting through wave after wave of monstrous creations, using a small band of adventurers' wildly differing abilities and tastes in skewering creatures on the end of pointy sticks. The pack-mule, an autonomous donkey that held the party's pickings in the original game, returns, along with a whole host of new pets. (Why drag along a stubborn donkey with your party when you can use the same cash to buy a baby bear?) Mages can even summon elementals, hulking creatures of water and fire to fight alongside the more traditional warrior classes.

As you battle through the hordes of beasties, you'll now accrue 'powers' – monstrous abilities that can cut through elf flesh like nothing you've seen. That's in addition to the usual XP points and skills, giving you enormous scope to customise your hero. Gas Powered Games are comparing their own fiction to that in Bioware's superb *Baldur's Gate* series of RPGs: you'll begin the game as a sword for hire, in the services of an evil overlord. Can you cope with sacking cities and pillaging the countryside? Or will the lure of the light side draw you in? The twist is that for all its narrative ambitions, this is still a fast, twitch RPG. It's all about the hitting, the party and the loot.

The Spy Says...

We know that the big RPG sequels are coming. While Atari are keeping details on *Baldur's Gate 3* secret, The Spy can reveal that *Neverwinter Nights 2* is under-development at Obsidian, the same team responsible for *Planescape: Torment*. That means a new campaign that should redress some of the criticisms of the original. But who's working on *Baldur's Gate*? Persistant rumours indicate the third game in the series will be a prequel to the first two, while featuring some of the same characters. Will Minsc make a comeback? ▶

› The rights to **Fallout 3**, latest in the post-apocalyptic RPG series, have been bought by Bethesda. Will we be adventuring over a fully 3D landscape, a la *Morrowind*, in 2005?

Games make the news

Modern warfare has become a televisual staple, all perfect hair, body-armour, embedded journalists and "back to the studio". If television lets the war into our front rooms, videogames take us directly into the warzone, to experience the thrill and terror of being under fire. We enter 2005 at war: in far-off lands, on our TVs and in our games.

BATTLEFIELD 2

■ **Publisher** Electronic Arts ■ **Developer** Dice ■ **ETA** March

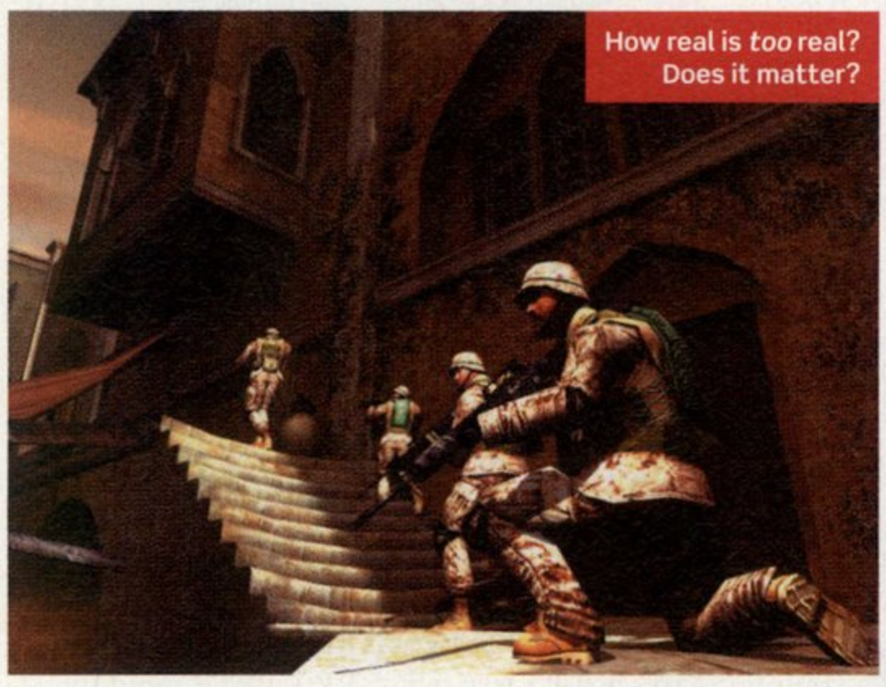
"He's not a reporter! This isn't Tonight with Trev. I've been had!"

Does the reality of modern conflict get you down? Is the TV coverage of street-to-street fighting just not exhilarating enough? In 2005 you'll be able to shoot your own quasi-news footage using the inbuilt *Battlefield* TV software. You'll be able to freeze frame, rewind and fast-forward, splicing together MTV-style fast cuts of you blasting your way through Middle-Eastern city streets. When you pause the action, you can even rotate the camera around a particular soldier, bullets and cartridge casings frozen in time, ragdolls suspended before collapsing in a heap.

It's not just about the Middle-East, though. The developers have been projecting into the future a little, and have settled upon the Chinese as another viable target for the US military. Now that really would be the war to end all wars. Coming to a news channel near you, soon.

CLOSE COMBAT FIRST TO FIGHT

■ **Publisher** Take Two ■ **Developer** Destineer ■ **ETA** Autumn



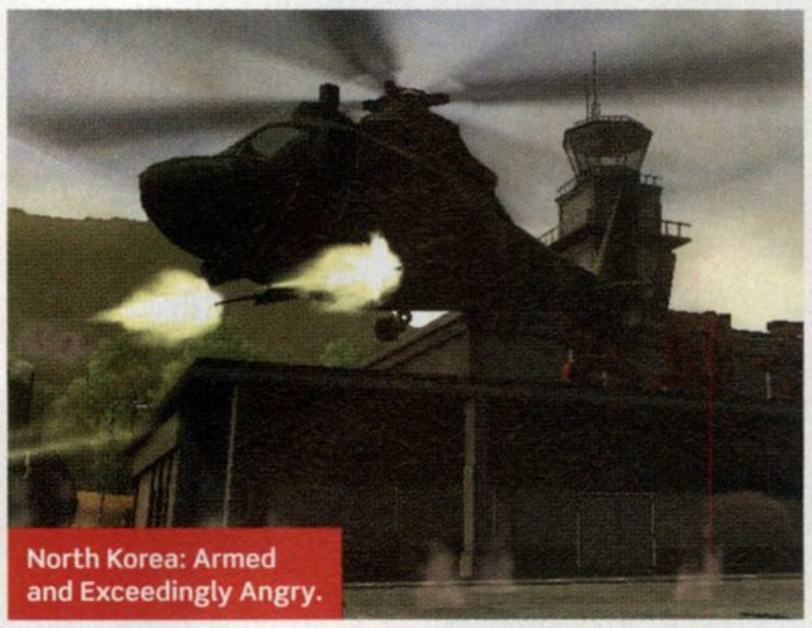
How real is *too* real? Does it matter?

The marines are taking it to the streets. *Close Combat* has been jointly developed for the US Army as a training tool, designed to give fresh conscripts a basic understanding of small arms tactics. It's set in modern day Beirut. You command a squad of four soldiers, directing them to clear the streets in as professional manner as possible, treating each firefight and choke-point not as an opportunity to test your twitch mouse-aiming, but as a tactical puzzle. Flanking the opponent, using cover and employing techniques like 'bounding over-watch' to maintain unit cohesion. That's military jargon for 'getting riddled with bullets by the nasty men on the rooftops'.

Fifteen of the marines who join you are based on real soldiers on active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. You'll be ordering digital representations of decorated men, like Rudy M. Lacroix, 32 year old Staff Sergeant from Detroit.

GHOST RECON 2

■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **ETA** Autumn



North Korea: Armed and Exceedingly Angry.

North Korea doesn't like *Ghost Recon 2*. It has a few choice words to say about the game's Clancy-inspired plot. A plot which envisages US forces entering Communist territory to destroy military assets wielded like fireworks by a rogue General. "Through propaganda, entertainment and movies, [Americans] have shown everyone their hatred for us," said one North Korean newspaper. "This may be just a game to them now, but a war will not be a game for them later. In war, they will only face miserable defeat and gruesome deaths."

The Spy Says...

Valve maintain that *Team Fortress 2*, their pre-*Battlefield* battlefield sim not only still exists, but that it's always being worked on. It was meant as the next evolution in online shooting, with a single player taking on the role of commander, laying down waypoints, as the grunts on the ground storm beaches, escort VIPs and demolish bridges. At the time, *Team Fortress 2* looked nothing short of astonishing, but the ideas and innovation were quietly overshadowed by the whiz-bang-blammo of *Counter-Strike*. Will Valve present the game to the same applause and disbelief that greeted *Half-Life 2*?

> While gamers salivate over the prospect of **Operation Flashpoint 2**, developers Bohemia Interactive have sold their tech to the military. Bad form, we say. Gamers come first.

KINGMAX®

Memory Technology Leader

DDRII

Kingmax is the world's leading memory module manufacturer with advanced packaging and testingfacilities, which offers best packaging technology and small physical size, great heat dissipation capabilities and stability of its memory products. This is why Kingmax has a distinctive edge over its rivals with its new generation, high bandwidth DDR2 memory products. Also, its mature R&D and design,manufacturing, and testing experience over the last six years with its TinyBGA memory modules is further testament that the best quality and stability are integral to the new Kingmax DDR2 memory products.

All of Kingmax's memory products undergo a rigorous testing process to ensure 100% conformity and are covered by Kingmax's global lifetime warranty ensuring product quality. Kingmax has always been and will continue to be committed to providing consumers with the very best in memory solutions.

Lifetime Warranty

Mars

GREEN(Lead-free)Memory

- **Extraordinary performance**
- **Exclusive anti-counterfeiting technology**

The Next-Generation Memory Technology

- 240-pin 533/667 MHz DDR module
- JEDEC standard 1.8 Volts operation, reducing power consumption by about 50 percent
- Memory signal termination inside the memory chip ("On-Die Termination") to prevent reflected signal transmission errors.
- Operational enhancements to increase memory performance, efficiency and timing margins.
- CAS Latencies: 3, 4 and 5
- Available memory capacity: 256MB / 512MB / 1GB
- Global lifetime warranty

KINGMAX®

Kingmax Technology Pty Ltd.

Sydney office: 02-9648 4658 Melbourne Office: 03-9551 8298

enquire: sales@kingmax.com.au www.kingmax.com.au

Suburb	Phone Number	Suburb	Phone Number	Suburb	Phone Number
Wangara	08 9309 4771	Sydney(City)	02 9891 5333	Notting Hill	03 9542 8688
Coopers Plains	07 3219 5246	Penrith	02 4722 9399	Clayton	1300 726 770
Mt Gravatt	07 3420 3200	Alexandria	02 9699 9966	Oakleigh	03 9568 6088
Springwood	07 3387 1555	Rockdale	02 9597 3688	Oakleigh	03 9563 3900
Adelaide	08 8231 0622	Liverpool	02 9602 8011	Sunshine	03 9311 3682
ACT	02 6253 1091	Silverwater	02 9748 8322	City(China Town)	03 9654 3888

Product Awards & Honors

RADIOACTIVE

CHECK YOUR HALF-LIFE

STALKER SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL

RELEASE MAY

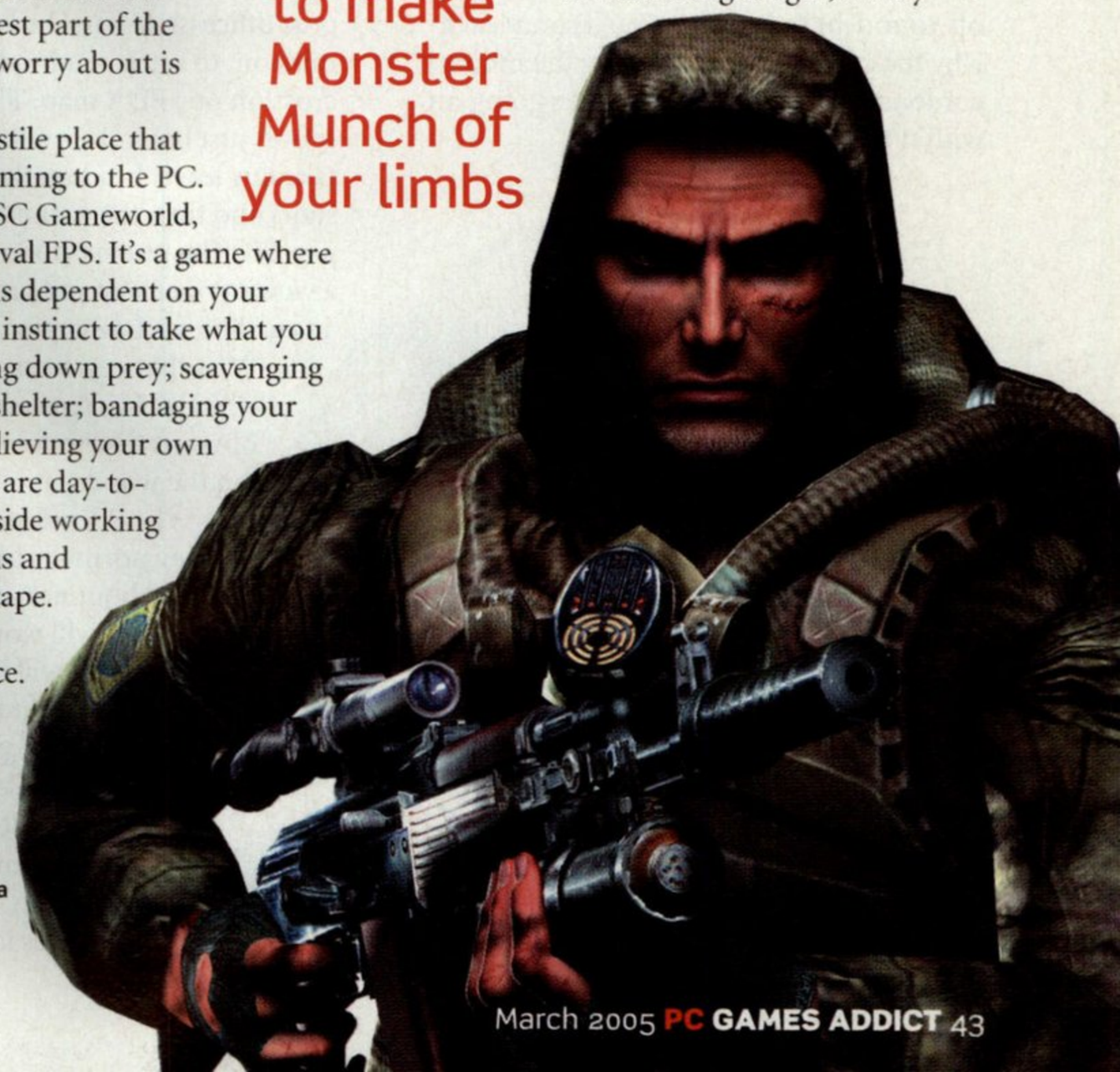
How life emerges from the ruins of a disaster

Back in 1999 an American wildlife survey team visited the site of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster to assess the impact of the accident on local flora and fauna. They were astonished by what they saw. They expected to find blackened scrubland, sick with radiation poisoning. What they actually found was a full-blown wildlife preserve. A thriving ecosystem populated by wolves, eagles, black storks, rodents, wild boar and deer. "How could this be?" officials asked. "It's simple," came the reply. "Humans have left. Now the northern portion of the Ukraine is the cleanest part of the nation. All it has to worry about is the radiation."

That idea, of a hostile place that teems with life, is coming to the PC. *Stalker*'s creators, GSC Gameworld, describe it as a survival FPS. It's a game where your very existence is dependent on your resourcefulness and instinct to take what you must to live. Tracking down prey; scavenging food; searching for shelter; bandaging your own wounds and relieving your own radiation poisoning are day-to-day activities, alongside working through the missions and exploring the landscape. Your virtual life requires maintenance. You play a hunter, living off 30-square kilometres of tainted land surrounding Chernobyl. You're a scrap metal merchant, earning a living by salvaging radioactive trinkets from the cursed earth.

So begins the *Stalker* demonstration. Darren Williams, a business type from publisher THQ, is explaining some of the game's backstory, while we take the helm on keyboard and mouse. We're underground, in a makeshift bomb shelter, gauging the mood of an arms dealer – your first contact in the game. "Around 2006," explains Darren, "something happens within the heart of the Chernobyl reactor. There's a bright light, swiftly ▶

He's going to make Monster Munch of your limbs



Maybe you want to take a detour around zombie central.

RADIOACTIVE

He's moody, dark, grim and unpleasant. Yes, he's you.

followed by massive panic. Everyone thinks there's been a second explosion at the reactor. The military quarantine the entire area in response. But people are curious. From that point until 2012 (the game's chronological start point) rumours spread about strange humans infesting the zone, alongside pockets of energy and unidentified artefacts. These artefacts have strange properties – some act as perpetual energy sources, some resist gravity. Governments, scientists and collectors will pay extraordinary amounts of money to get their hands on them." Just think of the executive toys you could make out of a physics-baiting silver sphere.

"A new group of people emerge, the Stalkers, mercenaries who enter the zone to explore and retrieve the artefacts. You play a novice, being nursed back to health by this guy, the Dealer. You'll begin by working off your debt to him, but you'll soon learn why the creatures are here, why the military cordoned-off the area, and what's going on within the reactor."

The blowout begins, as dogs tear across the countryside, looking for cover. And a bone.

That dealer is an ugly, worn-by-the-world character. His face tells his story. He looks tired, his skin picked and cracked by old age. His eyes move with that same disconcerting intensity as your team-mates in *Half-Life 2*. In his bunker – your starting point – the only light emanates from a bare bulb that swings across the ceiling, casting deep shadows against the dripping walls. From behind post office-style bars, he hands over the first mission: to retrieve a briefcase marked by a cross on our PDA map. The problem: that spot is just behind a military checkpoint. We take our leave, head up the crumbling earthen stairs and turn the corner. Then comes the pay-off. The bunker doors are thrown open, to a view of open sky and grey-green plains. Just in earshot, we hear a piercing banshee wail.

"Was that… a scream?"

"Yeah." Darren smiles, mocking our obvious discomfort. It's time for a walk in the woods.

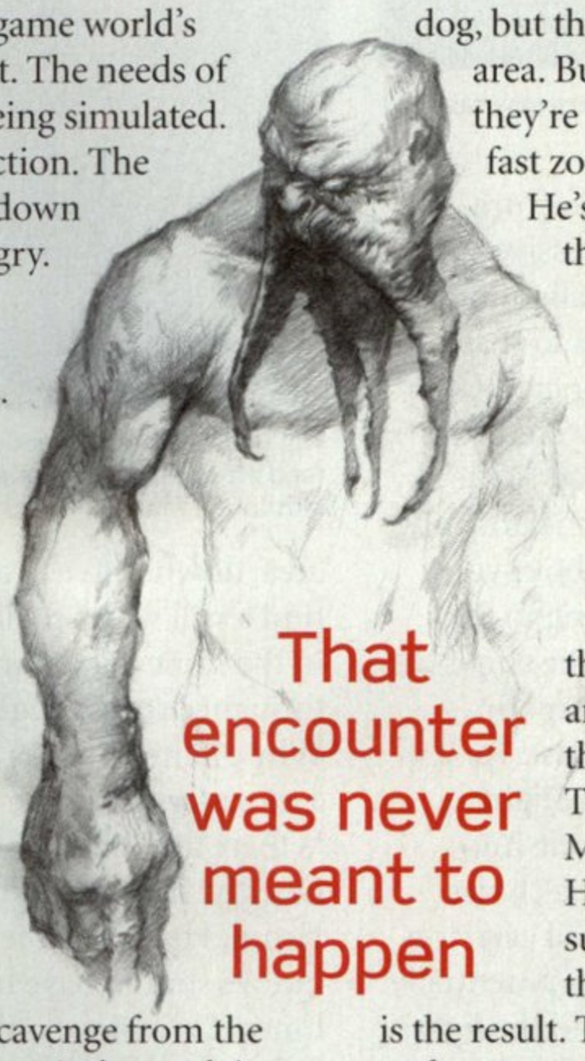
When developers talk about AI, they normally like to play it safe and talk about non-specifics. They say enemies will work in packs; that CPU forces will retreat if under fire, and they'll point to the way their infantry uses cover. But they won't explain why. Why does a creature do the things it does? What's going on under the surface? What is their motivation? *Stalker* attempts to redress this lack of character.

"No, I wear it because it's comfortable. Care to meet my friends?"

As we take our first footsteps, we can see a rotting zombie dog scuttle across the open field. It's chasing down prey. A patrol of three soldiers are making their way up the road, looking to their left and right, scoping for danger. There's a glimpse of a rival Stalker, just heading across the mountain. Ahead, a corpse is being dragged into the bushes, by a hideous cow/dog/moose mutant hybrid. All this life in a single moment, captured in a single frame. And the frame moves.

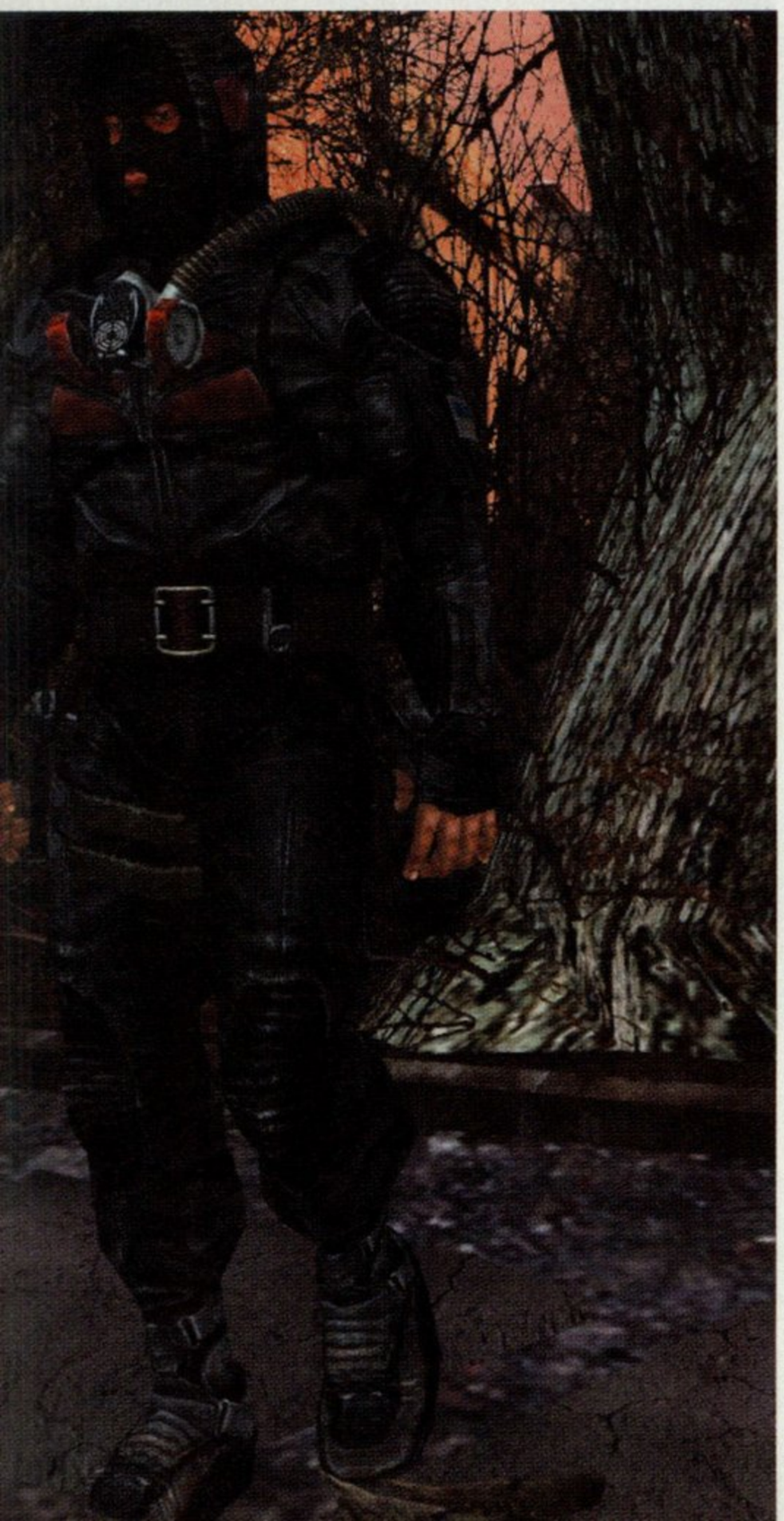
Most importantly, the game world's context is fully fleshed out. The needs of the native creatures are being simulated. There's a reason for the action. The wild animals are chasing down food because they're hungry. They look up, take note of you, then wander off. You're of no consequence. You are not a threat. The military haven't spotted you yet, but they're on the lookout. That's the point of their patrol. That other Stalker? Well, he's on his own mission. We don't need to know what he's doing *yet*. These entities are being driven by basic desires: for food, for shelter, for bra-a-a-ins. If a hybrid is hungry, it will try and scavenge from the area around him. If that area isn't supplying enough food, he'll migrate, spreading his search area. If he still can't find what he wants, then it's time to go hunting. He'll start with the weaker prey first, because his decaying, radiation-addled mind knows that big men with guns can kill him. But if he gets desperate then he's going to make Monster Munch from your limbs. There's a decision pattern there. The same thought process is applied in the minds of the rival Stalkers – if they see you as a threat, they'll attack. If not, then they'll take note of your presence but go about their nefarious business regardless.

Everything changes when you spot two creatures interacting – a Stalker and a zombie, two military squads, any combination possible in the game world. There's an ecosystem at work. Since that moment above, the creatures have moved on. Our rival Stalker has passed over the horizon. The military patrol has raised its rifles, alert to the danger of the wild dog, but they avoid conflict and leave the area. But they don't know the trouble they're in. A bloodsucker – a hideously fast zombie – has sniffed them out. He's charging them, from behind, three gruesome tentacles hanging from his chin, dangling in the wind. With one swipe, he smashes the rearguard to one side. The others turn, drop to their knees and open fire. It doesn't matter. The second falls. The third doesn't stand a chance. When he's finished, the bloodsucker crouches down and begins his feast. Realise this: that's not a scripted encounter. That was never *meant* to happen. Mister Bloodsucker was hungry. He fancied fresh marines for supper. Those three corpses and the scavengers circling for leftovers is the result. The motivations of characters and creatures are colliding, producing clever, beguiling results. Artificial life emerges.



That encounter was never meant to happen

It's emerging in a world that's as detailed as we've ever seen. These visuals match – and yes – outclass anything we've seen in those banner games, *Half-Life 2* and *Doom 3*. The technology is clearly spectacular: the diffused, sombre lighting in particular clads the world in a strange, ominous atmosphere. But it's the care with which every girder and brick is detailed, and placed so naturally, that stands ▶



MONSTROUS

Hot or not?

Those beastly wasters

Everything in videogames is a product of someone's imagination. In the GSC offices, buried within an abandoned factory in the industrial sector of Kiev, someone has a disturbing case of the heebie-jeebies.
The menagerie you face in *Stalker* redefines horrific. We've never seen a more disgusting collection of rotting flesh, vile imps, and awful mutations. When you see them in motion, all flailing limbs and banshee wails, the most you can do is stifle a gasp. They're abominations, cursed creatures that have no place on this Earth. Their existance seems painful, almost pathetic. They creep along the landscape, drifting from corpse to corpse, searching for their next meal. They inspire a direct emotional response: run. Yet it's important you get over it. Once you've stifled your gut reactions, you can concentrate on a semi-moral crusade to destroy them. Putting down the undead seems only natural. What do they put in the water in Kiev? Who dreamt these things into existence? Whoever he is, we don't want to meet him.

"As a dedicated Rastafarian, I chose to wear dreads in my beard when my hair fell out."

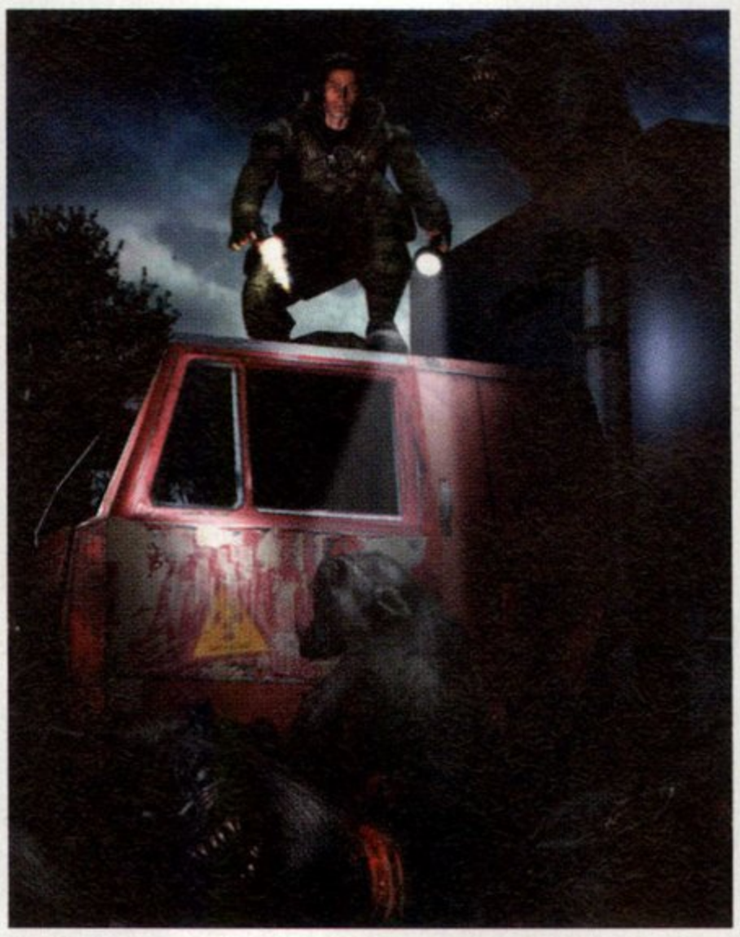
Holster your weapons and the rival Stalkers may respond in kind. You'll have to judge the situation.

out. This is post-apocalypse architecture, miraculously detailed. Most impressive are the ruins: industrial installations abandoned after the disaster. Bare metal turns to rust, weeds crack their way through concrete shells. Every wall and pattern is blessed with character. That's nothing compared to the sky. It's just *big* – as intimidating and melancholy as you'd imagine. Clouds churn above you, accelerated weather patterns adding to the slightly off-key ambiance. When the sun is obscured, signalling the next downpour, you unconsciously shiver in response. As the afternoon turns to evening, the light changes yet again, plunging the zone into a deep darkness. It's time to make a choice. Do you turn on your headlamp and carry on exploring the abandoned housing, potentially attracting mutants and monsters to the light? You could stumble around in the creeping dark, using your wits and hearing to navigate. Scratch that. You'd be wiser to call it a night.

But where to settle? As a Stalker, you're not immune to the ravages of the wild. While exploring, you must keep one eye on your own state. There are four fundamental concerns: hunger, exhaustion, radiation and health. By balancing these elements: finding shelter and barricading the doors for a good night's rest; finding tinned food or by cooking the birds you shoot out of the sky, you can keep your body fresh. Bandaging wounds will help in the short-term, but it's the vodka that guarantees long life. Legend has it within the zone (and much of the Ukraine) that a shot or two of the hard stuff can reverse radiation poisoning. Weighing your survival needs with wider objectives is crucial, according to Darren: "We're calling these skills zone-craft. It's not about seeing to your needs, but about reading the land, observing the creatures and learning from them."

It's about observing creatures, learning from them

An example. After a two-minute hike from our starting position, we come across a blood-trail. We follow it, walking parallel to the walls of a military checkpoint. It leads away from the



Will the torch and a weedy pea-shooter be enough to fend off the hounds? Tune in next month, violent mutilation fans!

area, down into a drainage culvert. There we find a still warm Stalker. He's a novice, dressed in the same urban uniform we have. The thought process begins in earnest: "Trouble. Why did he die. Has he bled to death? Was it a monster, or was he attacking the military? Is there anything we can take from his body? Does he have anything that's worth selling? Hmm. He's fired a few rounds from his AK, but we should have heard them go off. More hmm. Let's move on before anyone else follows the trail." Zone-craft isn't a single idea – it's a thought process. You begin to get a feel for the zone, for the way the creatures interact, to read the signs. Empty vodka bottles and discarded cigarette butts tell you humans have passed by. A levitating animal carcass, flip-flopping in midair, surrounded by flashes of blue light: Danger Will Robinson! Danger!

That's your first vision of the anomalies – your most feared enemy. Anomalies are randomised pockets of errant energy, with effects ranging from upsetting Newton to causing localised electrical storms. These forces are related to further oddities within the zone – to the artefacts, and to the blowout.

Stalker's massive capacity for surprise is about to be demonstrated. We're exploring a former industrial wasteland. This is a new build of the game, sent directly from the Ukraine. Darren is still unsure of what's inside. For the moment, we're searching for an elusive "Psychotic", a creature that's apparently superb, yet refuses to co-operate during 'Important Media Demonstrations'. It just won't come out to play. As we make to leave, the speakers throw up a deep, resonant rumble. The coffee mugs begin to jiggle. From the horizon pours a stream of dogs, cats, rats, mice, birds, zombies. It's like a post-apocalyptic Noah's Ark. We briefly turn to each other.

"What's going on?"

"I've no idea. Err. Hmm. Run?"

"YES."

The crowd that's gathered behind us has its own ideas.

"Is it a bug? Problem with the AI?"

"No, wait. Wait! They're fleeing the blowout! It's finally implemented!"

The creatures have sensed the forthcoming shockwave, the repeating shockwave that passes over the zone once every couple of days. The blowout changes the shape of the zone, crushing anything not under shelter (hence the dealer's bunker) re-arranging the anomalies, creating brand new artefacts. It's a constant pressure on your play: like a flash-migraine, leaving a steady throb at the back of your mind. Finding shelter as the conditions change, waiting out the storm, is essential. But where? And are you willing to share it with a couple of mostly armless faux-humans?

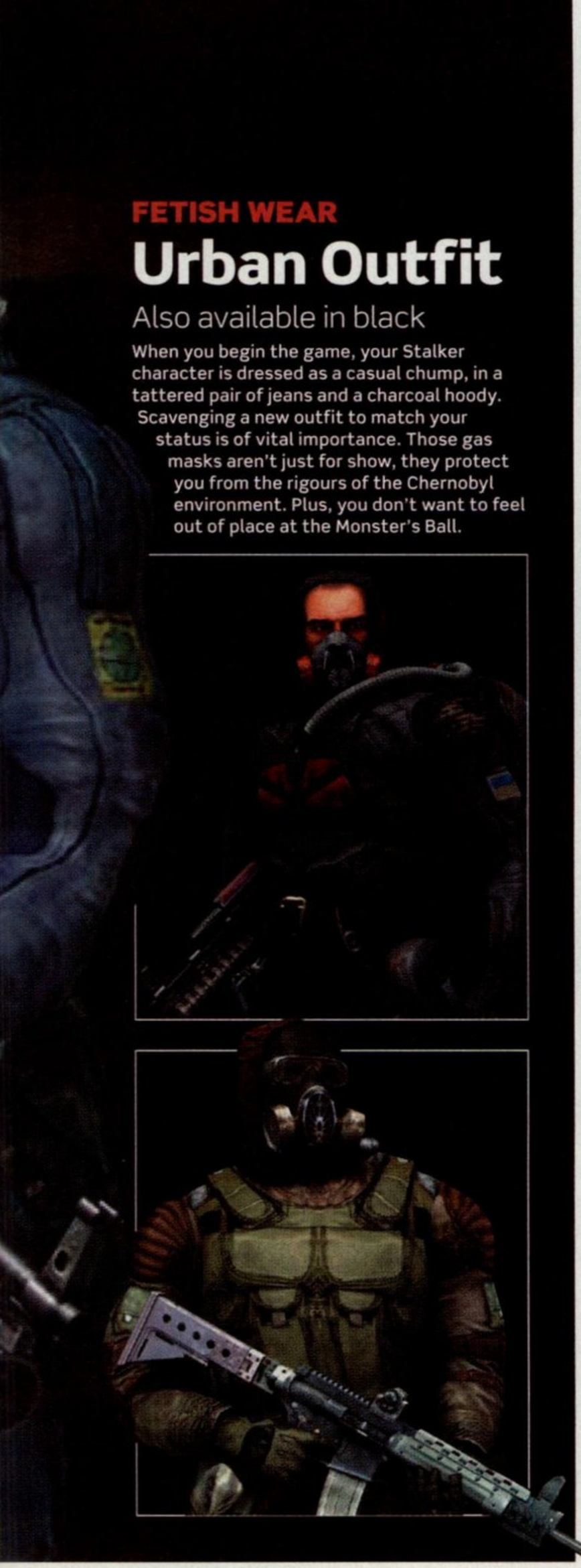
Playing through this extraordinary scene is incredible. Two emotions rush through you: panic and awe. To see technology and

FETISH WEAR

Urban Outfit

Also available in black

When you begin the game, your Stalker character is dressed as a casual chump, in a tattered pair of jeans and a charcoal hoody. Scavenging a new outfit to match your status is of vital importance. Those gas masks aren't just for show, they protect you from the rigours of the Chernobyl environment. Plus, you don't want to feel out of place at the Monster's Ball.



The standard rifles can be upgraded, by attaching scopes and silencers.

The level of detail is quite incredible. Every place tells a story of decay, death and destruction.

art combine in this way, to see events and artificial intelligence collide on screen is uniquely pleasurable, something *only* games can do. That's why *Stalker* might just be ahead of its time: the huge play area, the constant changes and movement… it's like nothing we've played. One last anecdote.

Your correspondent has taken offence to a buzzing helicopter, clearly patrolling the open areas, searching for errant Stalkers. Darren has pointed out that there's a bazooka tucked away in one of the side houses. In our collective mind, two plus two equals blammo!

We circle a wrecked railway bridge, searching for any possible sign of enemies, before deciding that it's clear, for the moment. A few seconds later, we've climbed the ladder to an observation tower, and are making our preparations. A telescopic sight is fixed to the launcher. Grenades are moved to our belt, ready to be quickly reloaded. An escape route is planned. Then, we stand, silently listening for rotor blades.

"Nervous?" Asks Darren.

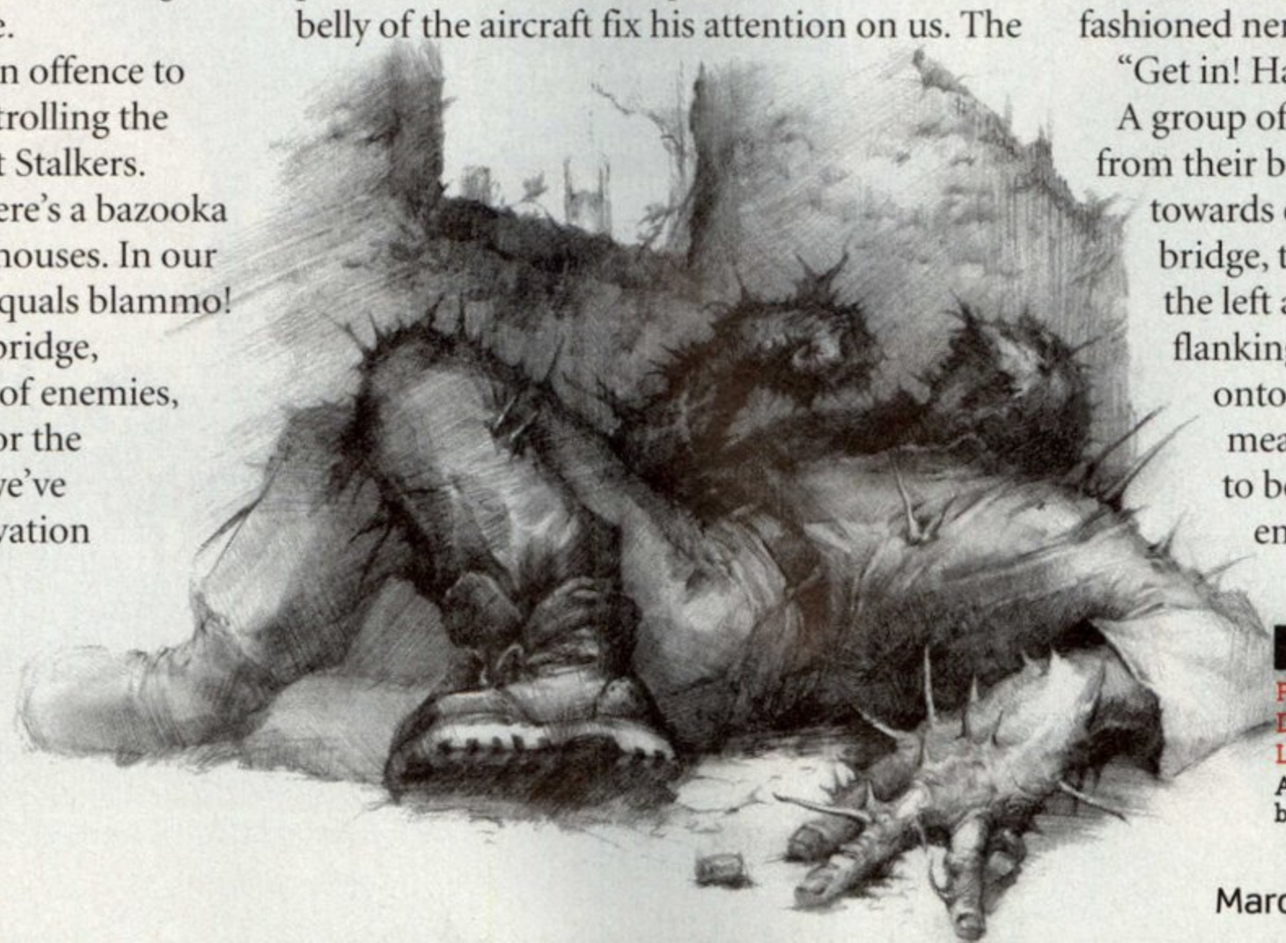
"Yup."

Our ears prick up. It's here. As the chopper passes over-head, a few pistol rounds to the belly of the aircraft fix his attention on us. The pilot turns, facing us head-on, hovering in place. We fire. The RPG lets out a jet of plasma and roars to its target. It strikes the whirly-bird head-on, showering engine parts and shrapnel down to the ground. High fives all round, followed by a faint sense of good old-fashioned nerdy embarrassment.

"Get in! Have some of that… oh dear."

A group of soldiers have sprinted out from their base and are dashing up the road towards our position. As we leap off the bridge, the marines fan out, peeling to the left and then to the right, successfully flanking us. We're cut down, left to flop onto the floor. We're just another meal for another scavenger, ready to be recycled. Even in death, life emerges afresh.

TIM EDWARDS



README

Publisher THQ
Developer GSC Gameworld
Link www.stalker-game.com
After *Half-Life 2*, the gaming world seems barren. *Stalker* should lift that haze.

If this was how miners blasted tunnels, more people would sign up for primary industries

Dissing your mum counts

Act of War

RELEASE MARCH

There's a general rule of game development: don't fight the established games on their own ground. You'll almost certainly lose and sell jack, because they've got momentum and you're nobody. But it's a rule that Eugen are shunning. They've seen *C&C: General*'s crown and think they can wrest it from its bleeding fingers.

And they might just have what it takes. *Act of War* plays like *C&C* from an alternate dimension, where the old RTS warhorse kept on pushing into new territory, instead of entrenching in familiar ground. Nowhere is this dynamic intent clearer than the single-player game, which has a more powerful narrative thrust than any recent RTS. Its techno-thriller plot penned by fifteen times NY Times bestselling author Dale Brown is only the start of it. This is a game which feels genuinely modern, its presentation half-way between CNN and an episode of 24.

Halfway between CNN and an edition of 24

The graphics engine lies at the heart of it, presenting intense urban environments previously unseen in the genre. Play a mission set in a London riot and the streets between the towering skyscrapers are packed with placard-waving protesters. An inset screen-within-a-screen pops up in the corner to show you more details, TV-style. Then there are the in-game cut-scenes, out-of-game cut-scenes, the return of real-life-acted video footage… it's a barrage of information which exemplifies the information age which inspires this game.

ON THE DISC A trailer and more screenshots of appalling urban destruction for you to enjoy › Galleries

The explosions are some of the most livid we've seen, to the extent that you can even use them as cover to perform devastating strikes before anyone realises. Weapon modelling is impressively vicious: committing the wrong troops in the wrong place leads to almost instant death. It's a hard-nosed, day-after-tomorrow RTS, spectacularly beautiful and packed full of ideas. Is that enough to dethrone *C&C*? Only its spring offensive will tell.

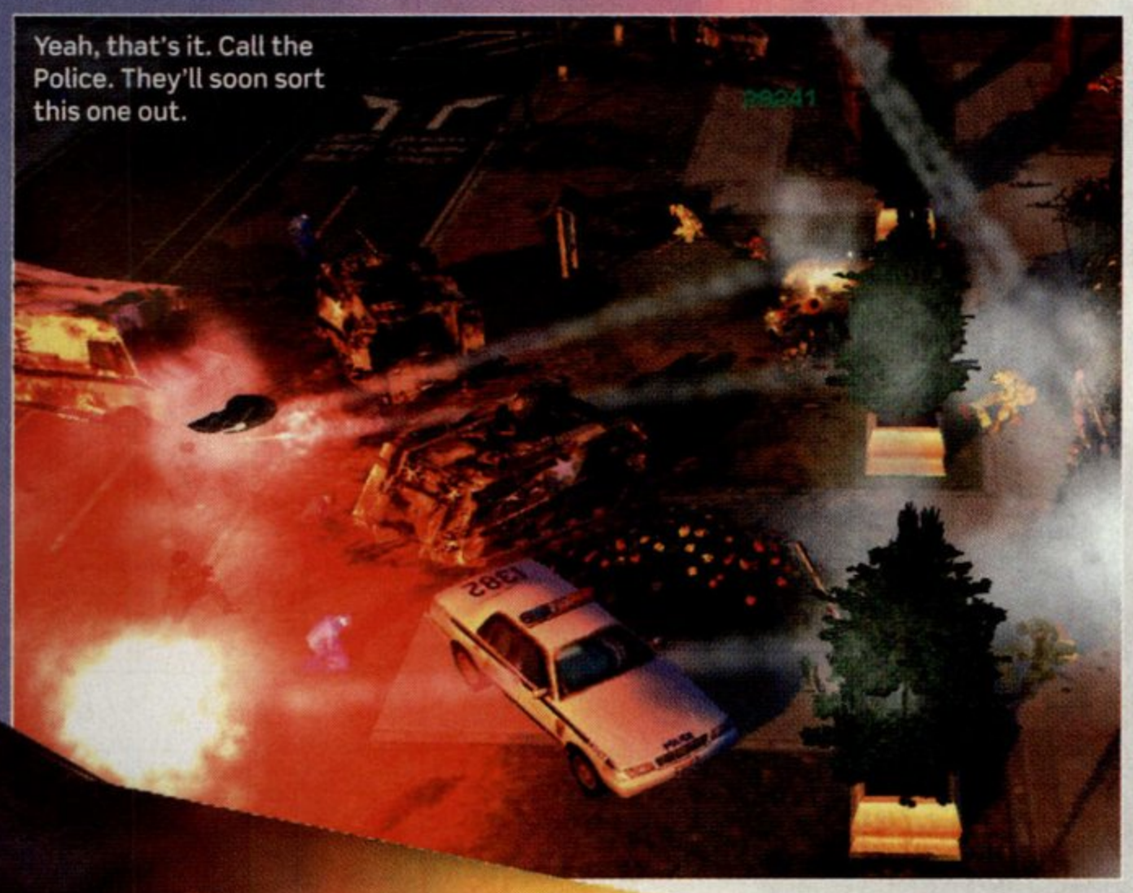
KIERON GILLEN

THE PITCH
Alternate dimension *C&C: Red Alert* with all the techno-thriller trappings you could want.

README

Publisher Atari
Developer Eugen
Link www.atari.com
An uphill battle against an established series, but it's certainly packing enough firepower.

Air power is key, but easily disabled by air-to-ground missiles. Very easily disabled.



A stealth bomber drops silent explosives - which sneak up behind people and slash their throats.

PC GAMES ADDICT
SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

Yes
I would like to subscribe to *PC Games Addict* starting with the next available issue

1. YOUR DETAILS

TITLE ☐MR ☐MRS ☐MS ☐MISS

Name_____

Address_____

_____

State_____ Postcode_____

Email_____

Telephone (inc. area code)_____

PICK YOUR FREE GAME

☐ Football Manager 2005
☐ Sonic Heroes

☐ Tick if you do not wish to receive information about special promotions from Derwent Howard and carefully selected partners.

2. PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

AUSTRALIA

☐ One payment of $49.95 for 6 issues SAVE 23% OFF COVER PRICE
☐ One payment of $94.95 for 12 issues **RECEIVE FREE GAME**

NEW ZEALAND

☐ One payment of AU$112.95 for 12 issues **RECEIVE FREE GAME**

3. METHOD OF PAYMENT

☐ Cheque/Money Order (Aust. only) Please make payable to Derwent Howard Pty Ltd. (AUD$ drawn on an Australian bank account)

☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Bankcard

Card No

☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐

Expiry date ☐☐/☐☐

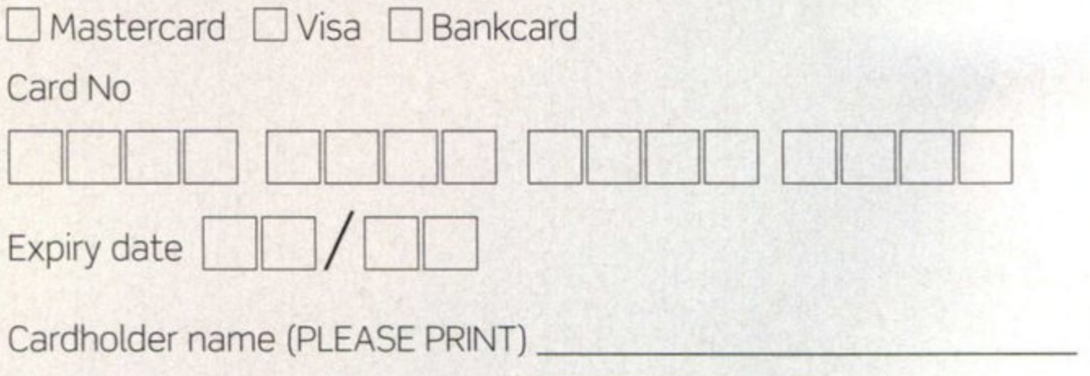
Cardholder name (PLEASE PRINT) _____

_____

Signature_____ Date

DERWENT HOWARD

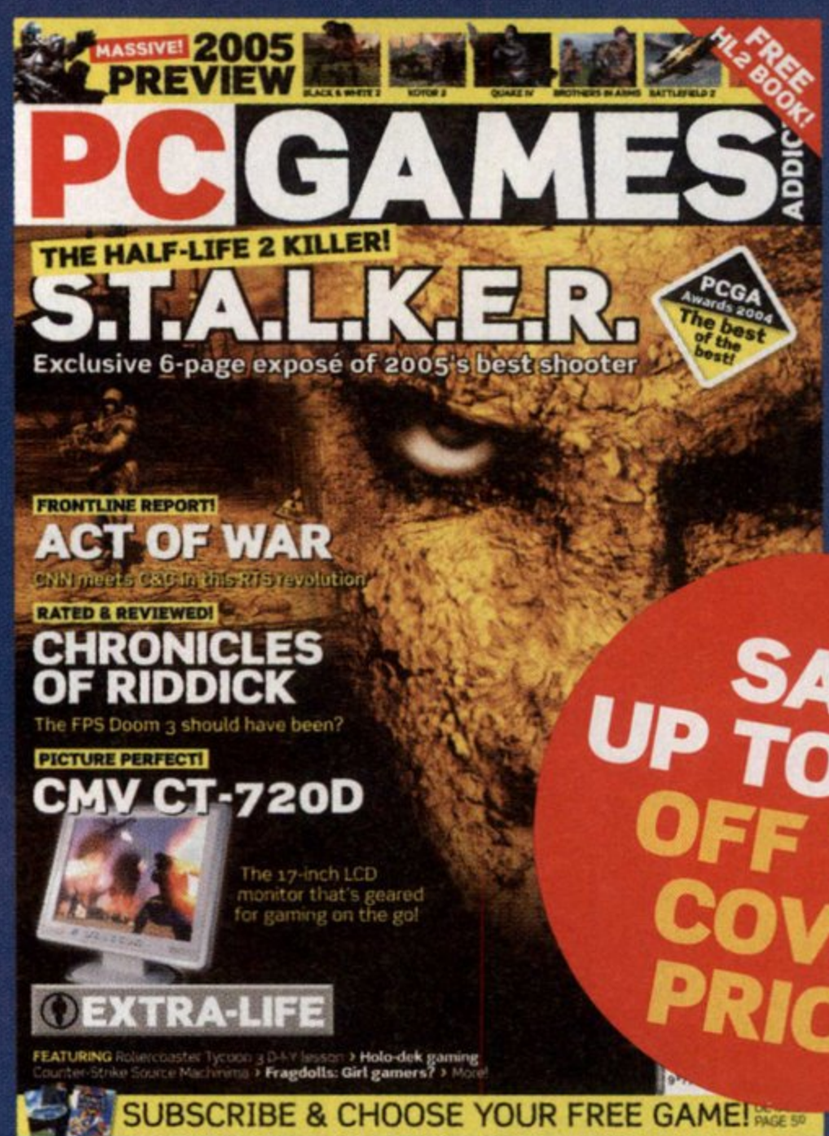
Order Code: PCGA 30
Offer ends: 8 Mar 2005



FREE POST:
Derwent Howard, Reply Paid 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355

SUBSCRIBE TO THE NEW UNIFIED CD+DVD PCGA!

PAY ONLY $7.95 PER ISSUE


MASSIVE! 2005 PREVIEW
FREE HL2 BOOK!
PC GAMES ADDICT
THE HALF-LIFE 2 KILLER!
S.T.A.L.K.E.R.
PCGA Awards 2004 The best of the best!
Exclusive 6-page exposé of 2005's best shooter
FRONTLINE REPORT!
ACT OF WAR
RATED & REVIEWED!
CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK
The FPS Doom 3 should have been?
PICTURE PERFECT!
CMV CT-720D
The 17-inch LCD monitor that's geared for gaming on the go!
EXTRA-LIFE
FEATURING Rollercoaster Tycoon 3 D-I-Y lesson › Holo-dek gaming Counter-Strike Source Machinima › Fragdolls: Girl gamers? › More!
SUBSCRIBE & CHOOSE YOUR FREE GAME!
SAVE UP TO 27% OFF THE COVER PRICE!

12 issues for $94.95
SAVE 27% off cover price!

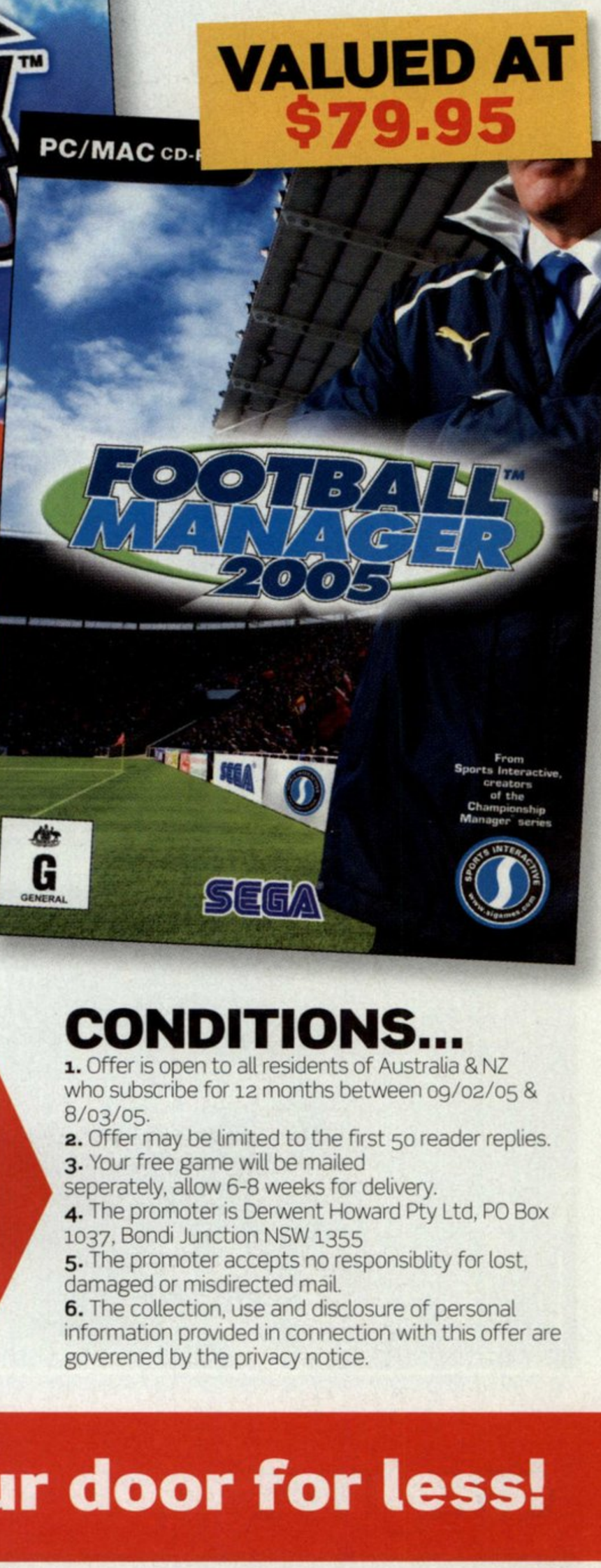
Subscribe and have *PC*

SUBSCRIBE!

FREE GAME

Sega have become ever more verstaile over the years, and thanks to the generosity of the famous console giants, those who subscribe to **PC GAMES ADDICT** this this issue will experience a slice of Sega's PC gaming range. Take your pick of either **SONIC HEROES** or **FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005**, for a dose of either old school Sega platforming or hard-core PC sports management goodness respectively.

VALUED AT $49.95



3 WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE:

- **Go to our website:**
  www.derwenthoward.com.au
- **Call our order hotline:**
  1800 007 820
  Lines are open 9AM-5PM Monday - Friday
- **Fill in the form & FREEPOST to:**
  Derwent Howard, Reply Paid 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355

CONDITIONS...

1. Offer is open to all residents of Australia & NZ who subscribe for 12 months between 09/02/05 & 8/03/05.
2. Offer may be limited to the first 50 reader replies.
3. Your free game will be mailed seperately, allow 6-8 weeks for delivery.
4. The promoter is Derwent Howard Pty Ltd, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction NSW 1355
5. The promoter accepts no responsiblity for lost, damaged or misdirected mail.
6. The collection, use and disclosure of personal information provided in connection with this offer are goverened by the privacy notice.

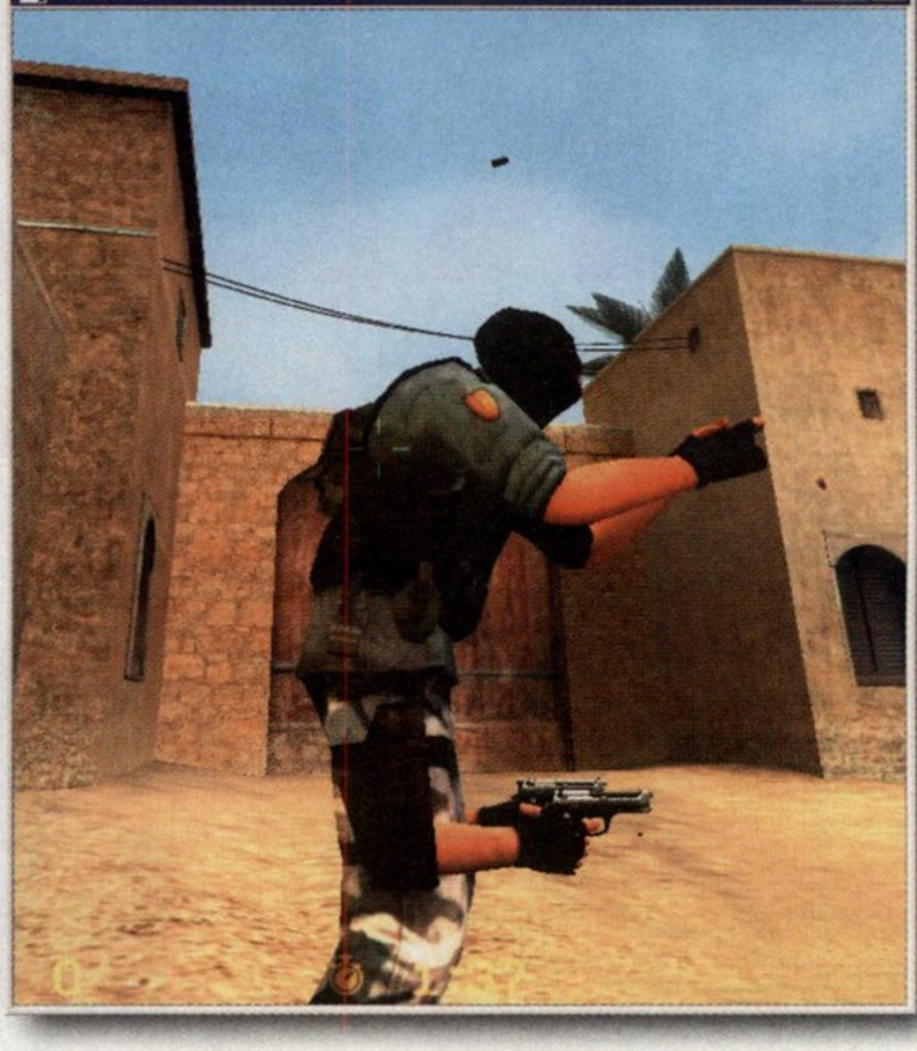
***Games Addict* delivered to your door for less!**

Gamer Snap

Studying physics can actually be funny...

Suspected drug mules face stiff new 'frisking' techniques... **Richard Lievesley**

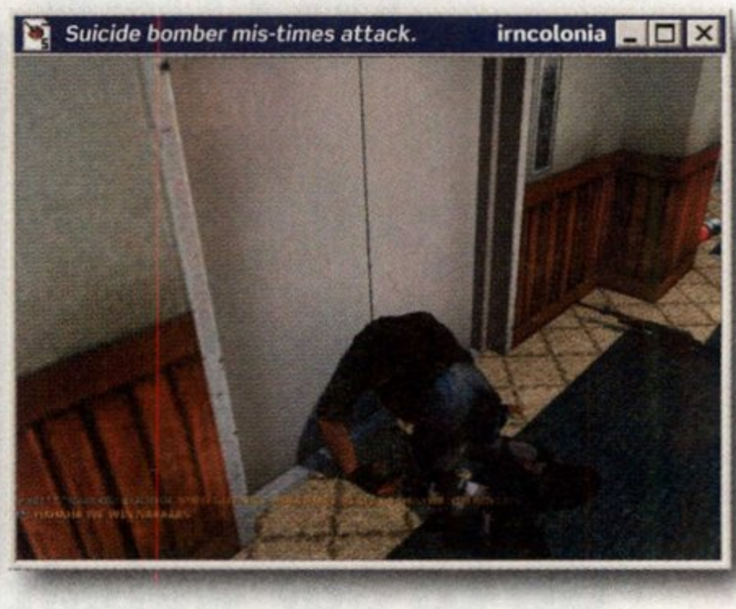
Injecting soldiers with viagra doubled their effectivness. **Anon**



'The fish aren't biting...' **Danny**

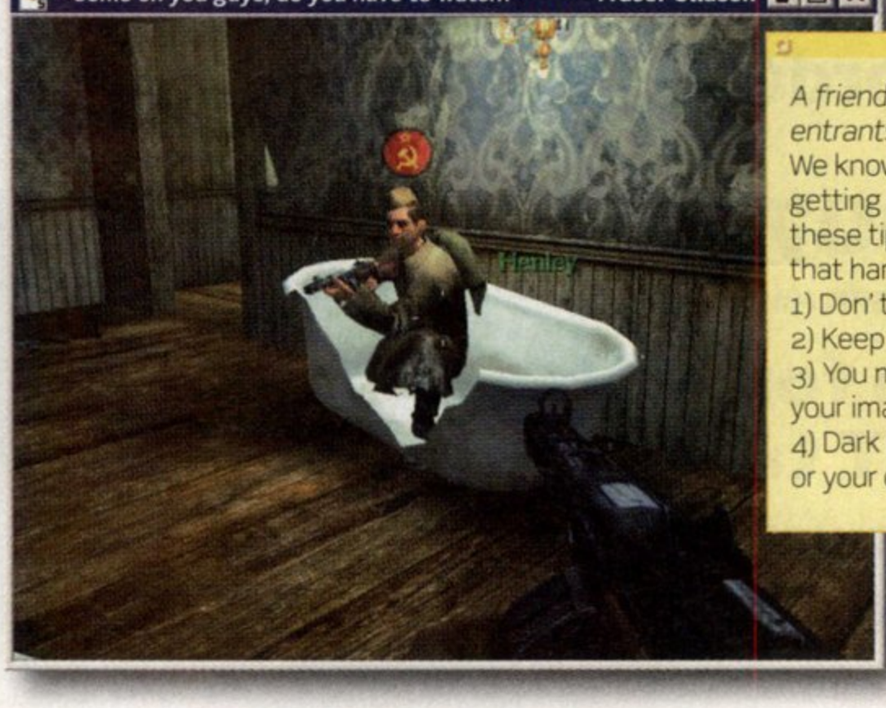
'Camera loves you, but more eye contact!' **Capiche**

Suicide bomber mis-times attack. **irncolonia**



Giving a hand with morale was a big job. **Matthew Coussell**

"Come on you guys, do you have to watch?" **Fraser Ollason**



A friendly reminder to Gamer Snap entrants of PCGA...

We know how much effort goes into getting a funny snap sometimes, so keep these tips in mind so you don't spoil all that hard work:

1) Don' t forget to caption it...
2) Keep your caption short so it can fit
3) You may offer multiple captions with your image - to help get one that fits
4) Dark images don't print well. Be bright or your entry will probably be binned...

Wastebasket

CREATIVE

Need a capture program? Use IrfanView on the cover disc! Then send your snap & witty caption to pcga@derwenthoward.com.au with "SNAP" as the subject. Funniest entry each month wins an excellent set of Creative T7700 speakers!

www.thermaltake.com.au

Coolall your Life

Thermaltake Coolall your Life

Compatible with liquid cooling

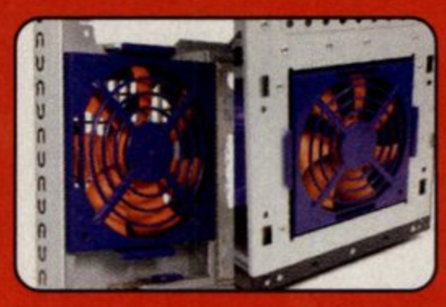
IEEE 1394 | USB 2.0 | 2 Way Lock | Audio

Control Knob x2 | 12025 Fan x2 | LCD Monitor | Fan Speed

SViking Mid Tower Case Series

Defining style and performance

Dual VR function fan speed controller

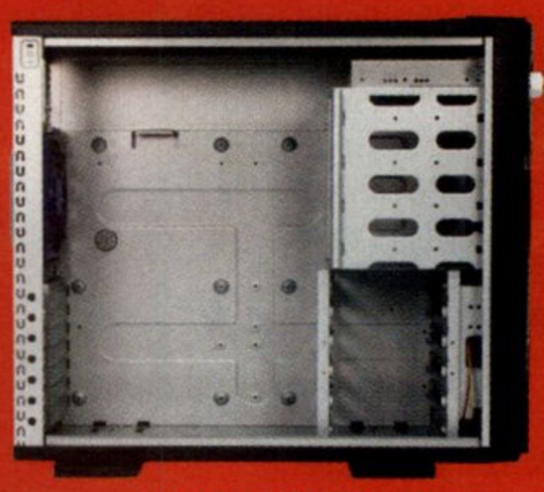


12cm silent fans in front & rear

Lockable side panel

Sliding drive rails

Front access Dual USB2.0 / Audio & Speaker / IEEE1394 Ports



Internal Structure

Drive Bay:

- External: 5.25" x 4, 3.5" x 1
- Internal: 3.5" x 5

Thermaltake

Coolall YOUR LIFE

THERMALTAKE AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

UNIT 1 / 49 HENDERSON ROAD, ROWVILLE VIC 3178

PH: 03 9763 1622 FAX: 03 9763 1677

EMAIL: sales@thermaltake.com.au

Web:www.thermaltake.com.au

Purchase a S Viking Mid Tower Case to receive a free luminescent IDE & FDD Cable. Send proof of purchase along with this completed coupon to 1/49 Henderson Road, Rowville, Vic, 3178 and your free gift will be sent out to you

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone No.: _____ Place of Purchase: _____

Details will be used for despatching of gift only and will not be retained or used as part of a database.

Code: **PCGA-TTSV-0105**

* Proof of purchase must be supplied to redeem special offer.

LU IDE & FDD Cable

Thermaltake is a wholesaler and does not sell direct to the public.
The above products can be purchased from most independent computer dealers throughout Australia.

Uncensored

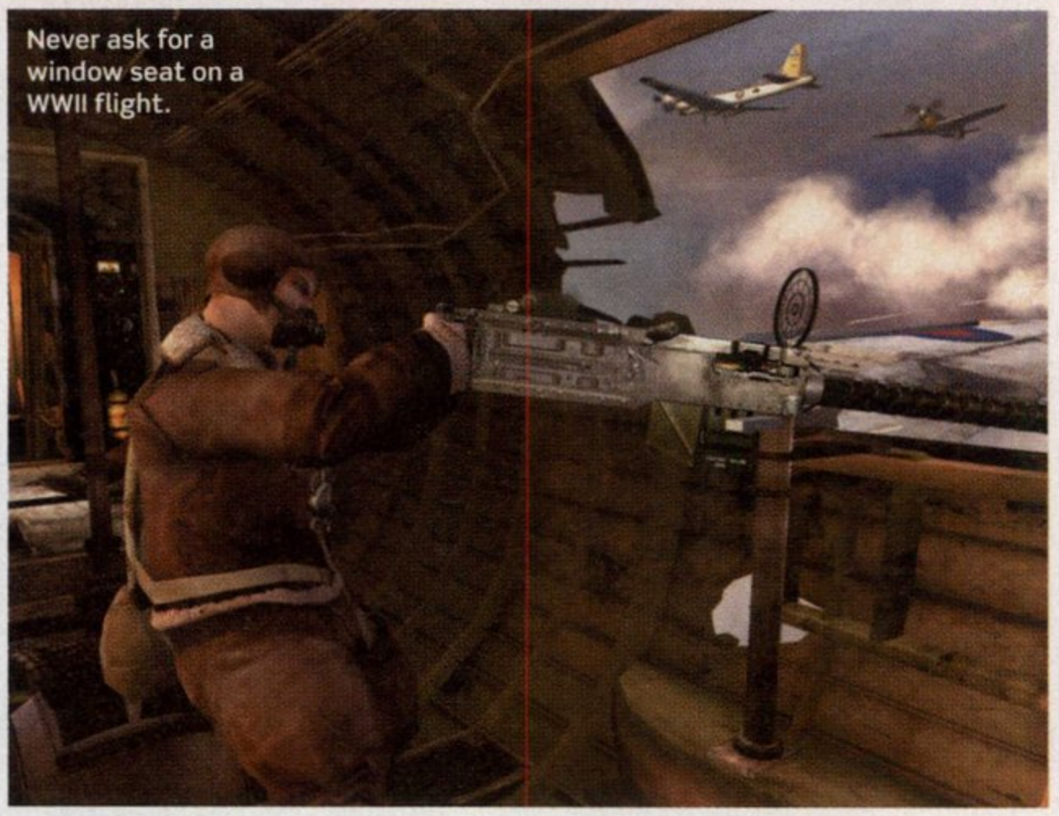
You know the score. Because you wrote it

READER REVIEW OF THE MONTH

CALL OF DUTY: UNITED OFFENSIVE

Reviewed by Samuel Geen

PCGA 27, Score 82%



Dr Gray Matter turns to the slumbering soldier in front of him, shaking hands pouring pills into the open mouth of the patient, Corporal Duty – a model soldier, he'd been assured back at the Ward. As night turns to morning, Dr Matter finds a clipboard and foxhole and begins to observe the changes he's wrought...

United Offensive, then, is *Call of Duty* on steroids. From the snowy Battle of the Bulge through to the rain-sodden plains of Kursk, *CoD* is plunged into battle like never before. Shells smash into mud and metal; the screams of the dying mingle with the battle-cries of the living; shots ring out from across the forest as your sergeant yells at you to "Pour it on!"

Yet the drugs don't always work. The consistent pressure often goes too far, forcing constant fixes of quicksaves simply to keep you alive. Death is something that overcomes you rather than forces strategic thinking. Sure, Kursk was a bloodbath, but games should reward skill, not blind luck in avoiding bullets.

UO does work, and works well, but the good doctor's treatment has killed some of the subtlety of the first game.

Sam's Rating 84%

PCGA *responds: Only during the quieter moments do you get the chance to reflect on the enormity of what you've seen.* United Offensive *has no quiet moments.*

LOTR: BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

Reviewed by James Hoets

PCGA 29, Score 76%

Pretty, sure, but an authentic classic?

Battle for Middle-Earth is visually the greatest RTS experience so far in gaming. It features a great physics engine, graphics engine and sounds.

The races are all perfectly balanced; Isengard with its mighty uruk-hai and siege weapons has the greatest soldiers in the game. Rohan the peasant people are weak until they can train elves, ents, and of course the Rohirrim. They also boast Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli.

Gondor has great and effective infantry in swarms when led by Boromir. Mordor last but definitely not least boasts trolls, and Mumakil! And FREE orcs.

The game is a great and accurate representation of the movies and therefore *LOTR* movie lovers will be addicted to it. However it is not good for a first RTS game if you've never tried the genre.

If you're expecting a masterpiece then that's what you've got because there is little disappointment to be found here. Of all the great fantasy RTS titles there is no need to look further, the greatest is upon us. Do what it takes, auction your siblings, become a busker, trade in other RTS titles! Just make sure you buy this game!

James's Rating 96%

PCGA *We ran this for the sake of presenting an opinion completely alternate to our own. There's no special physics, the AI is awful and we doubt anyone would back this RTS if it weren't for the license.*

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

Reviewed by David Deacon

PCGA 19, Score 92%

"Help! A greasel killed my guide dog."

After playing *Deus Ex*, I had high hopes for the sequel. But I was disappointed. Gone was the great skill points system. Where was the joy of being able to pick up a sniper rifle, remember all your hard work to stop the scope flying all over the place, and then take down a target a mile away? There were more biomods, sure, but they had very little impact on the game as a whole. Collective ammo meant that there was no switching to a weapon to continue a fight, and left you running around levels scavenging for any kind of weapon. But what about the story? It was acceptable, but too short. This game took me seven hours to complete, doing absolutely every side-quest, on normal difficulty. It would take me about twice that long to finish the original. The endings were also entirely unsatisfying, and I could not warm to the player character as I could to JC Denton. The real conspiracy here is the machinations of the evil Xbox, and how it forced this game to be simplified for console gamers. If you really want to find out what happens, read a spoiler guide. It's less painful.

David's Rating 60%

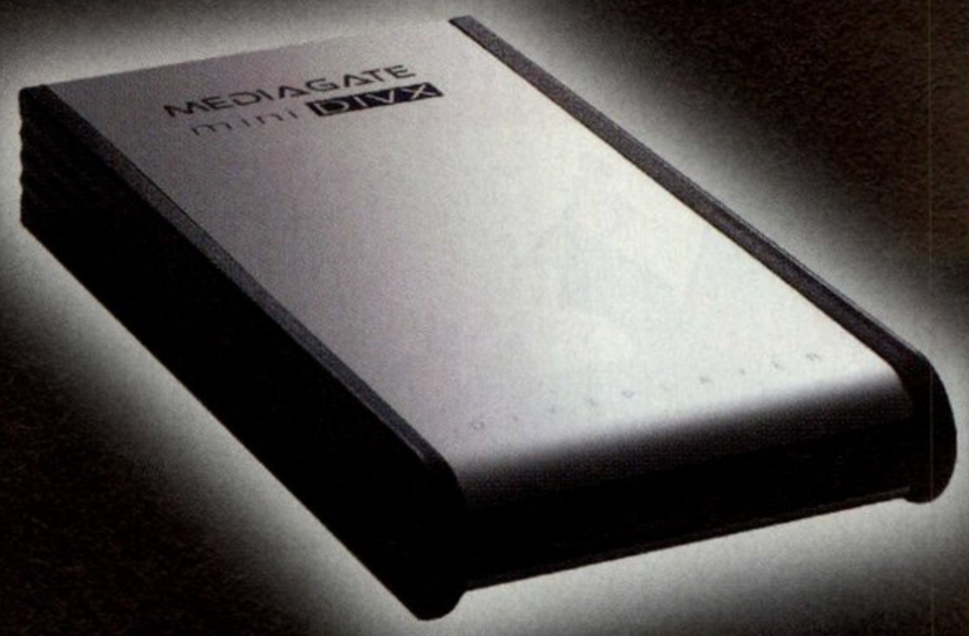
PCGA *responds: Fair points, but would you be so critical if you'd never played* DX*? Or it had another name?*

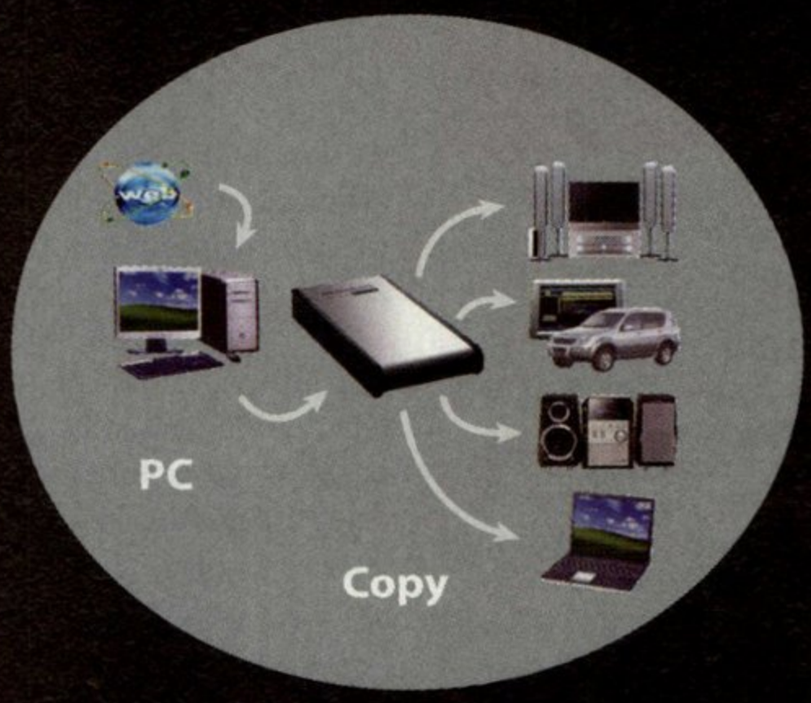
JNC

The reader review of the month wins an awesome portable JNC SSF-31 MP3 Player!
Send your words to pcga@derwenthoward.com.au with "UNCENSORED" as the subject, along with your contact details. Reviews must be 120-200 words so we can print them!

Ever wanted to take your favourite movies away with you but didn't have the space?

Introducing the MediaGate - the Pocket Sized Portable Media Player from AL Tech





RRP $190

Imagine a pocket sized device that connects to any TV and allows you to watch 40 to 50 movies, view thousands of images and listen to thousands of MP3 songs. This portable media player allows DivX, MPEG4, DAT, Xvid, MP3, OGG, WMA and JPEG play back from any 2.5"notebook sized hard disk. Hard disk not included. (20GB minimum recommended). Carry it with you anywhere with the handy carry case, use it in your car with the car adapter or connect to your PC to be used as an external hard disk drive. The unit is supplied with an infrared remote control, making the MediaGate the ultimate Audio/Video companion. (Carry case and car adapter sold separately)

1 PC User TOP BUY JANUARY 2005

PC PowerPlay POWER AWARD

AL Tech

www.airlinktek.com

Anyware is a wholesaler and does not sell direct to the public. The above products can be purchased from most independent computer dealers throughout Australia.

Anyware™ COMPUTER ACCESSORIES

www.anyware.com.au
www.anywarenz.co.nz

SYDNEY	MELBOURNE	PERTH	ADELAIDE	BRISBANE	AUCKLAND
TEL: 02-9879 5788	TEL: 03-9763 8200	TEL: 08-9242 8588	TEL: 08-8347 0488	TEL: 07-3856 3999	TEL: 64-9-634 8088
FAX: 02-9879 5388	FAX: 03-9763 8400	FAX: 08-9242 8688	FAX: 08-8347 0466	FAX: 07-3856 1777	FAX: 64-9-634 8078

Purchase an AL Tech MediaGate Portable Media Player to receive a FREE carry case. Carry case includes compartments for the MediaGate, remote control and cables, making the MediaGate the ultimate portable media player. Send proof of purchase along with this completed coupon to PO Box 9241, Scoresby, Vic, 3179 and your free gift will be sent out to you.

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone No.: _____ Place of Purchase: _____

Details will be used for despatching of gift only and will not be retained or used as part of a database.

Code: **PGGA-ALT-0305**

* Proof of purchase must be supplied to redeem special offer.

Cables

Illustrations by **David Lyttleton**

Featuring: poverty, ungratefulness and realism

SHORTS

When I was small I used to play a game called *Nightmare 3D*. I am wondering if you ever rated it and if you did, what score did it get?
Harry, email
You're probably thinking of Nitemare 3D, *a substandard* Doom*-era shooter. We never reviewed it, but it's a lot worse than you remember.* **PCGA**

I have found various problems with *Doom 3*. The main ones are that when you shoot at a creature they don't react accordingly – they don't slow down or fly backwards when you shoot them with a shotgun, they carry on coming at you.
Alex Harrison, email
We've heard about problems of this sort. They're caused by a phenomenon known as 'Extremely poor aim'. **PCGA**

Tolkien off the 'net

While reading the latest copy of your great magazine, I spied a small article about a Middle-Earth mod for *Morrowind*. As a huge fan of the game, and an even bigger fan of Tolkien's works, I stopped reading and jumped on my computer to have a look. When I got to the web page I was absolutely disgusted to find that the mod had been shut down by Tolkien's estate.

I can't believe that they would go to the lengths of shutting down a not-for-profit organisation that is making a tribute to the books they love. In fact, the fact that it was a not-for-profit organisation might have something to do with it. They can't make any money out of them, so why let them continue?

I am also completely gutted that these people have made money out of every Tolkien book I have bought, every time I saw the movies, not to mention the DVDs I bought. This especially hurts considering they had nothing to do with the creative process in the first place, they just sit there and rake in the profits.
Dan Hubbard, email

It's shocking isn't it? The Lord of the Rings was once upon a time simply considered the works that inspired generations, and has had fan sites forever. The way that particular license was sliced up was so anal, it's hard to believe that these games appeared because of a love of the subject matter. If that's so, why wait until now to do all these games? **PCGA**

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Bunch of AI

I find my views on gaming polarised. For example, on the one hand games such as *Call of Duty* offer an exhilarating experience, but on the other to suggest they capture the atmosphere of war is hard to take seriously. In *CoD* I don't need to worry about never coming home again – if my avatar dies then I simply load from the last save point and can get back to watching the 'horror' unfold yet again.

I don't want games to put me in a situation so real that I'll find myself in therapy, I want games that throw me into exhilarating scenarios because they're fun! Although, this does present the problem of abusing history for our own pleasure. *CoD* wasn't horrific, it was a bunch of AI buddies falling over in WWII costumes, with any real gore or explicit language of the battlefield censored. Games will never be able to capture the horror of war, because they don't portray the reality of death. If they did, playing them would be no fun. So the truly overwhelming fun comes from abstract titles like *Rez*, or awe-inspiring games like *Homeworld*, while games like *CoD* provide a hugely entertaining, but ultimately hollow diversion.
Tom Pritchard, email

Interesting point. It's rare to really want to play a shooter through again, while a good strategy game will have you coming back simply due to its core mechanic – not its set-pieces that, once experienced, lose their appeal. Moreover, are we becoming immune to shooters' shock tactics? How many times can we enjoy shooting Nazis in the face? Hmm – maybe it's best not to answer that in case some right wing mob uses it against us!. **PCGA**

Is it a crime?

With all the fuss over the two big MMORPGs out now, I'm wondering what your take on the issues of player privacy are. In particular, what do you guys think about the Ceciliantas guy on *EverQuest II* who got sprung having net sex with a bloke.
Could these people who did this get into legal trouble somehow?
DeathAngel, email

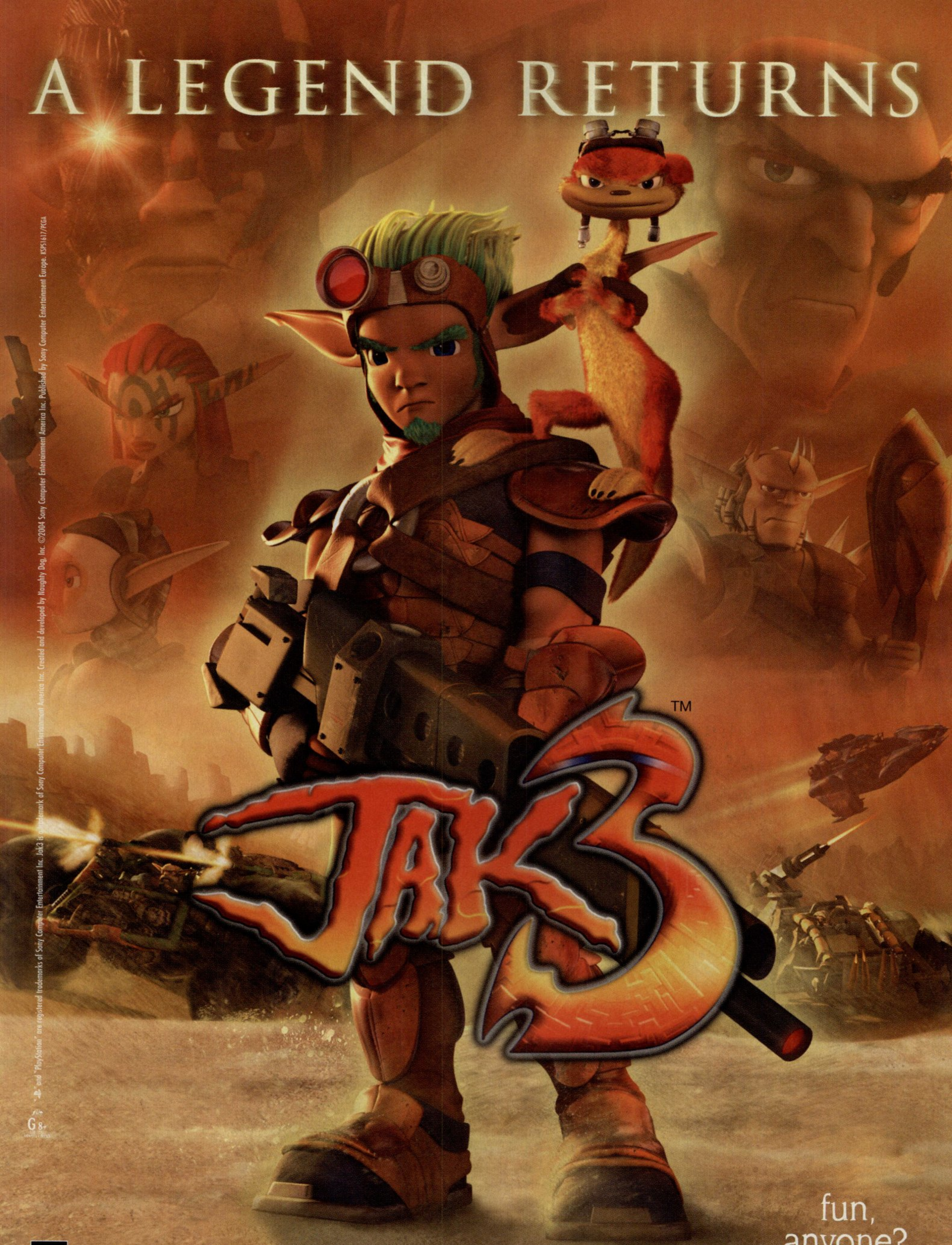
Normally we'd say teasing people like this is bad, but the truth is simple - 'The net is not a private place'.

If you're going to have net sex or put something personal up on the net, expect some idiot to want to say something nasty or offensive about it. **PCGA**

ATARI

The best letter of the month wins a bundle of great games from Atari's 'Heroes' range. Send your rants, ravings and reactions to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** with "CABLES" as the subject. Long or vulgar letters may be edited to fit or toned down accordingly...

A LEGEND RETURNS



"PS2" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Jak3 is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Created and developed by Naughty Dog, Inc. ©2004 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Published by Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. KSPS1617/PEGA

G 8+

NAUGHTY DOG

www.jak3-game.com

fun, anyone?

PlayStation 2

PASS MY BALL OR I'LL

YOU!

NOT IF I

YOU FIRST!

WANT ME TO COME OUT THERE AND

THE BOTH OF YOU?

Talk is cheap.

Humiliate your mates online or with a Multitap using 15 all new upgradeable weapons, 7 cutting-edge gadgets and combat vehicles, now available for the ultimate destruction. May the best weapon win.

INSOMNIAC For more ideas on how to outblast your mates go to www.ratchetandclank3.com

fun anyone?

PlayStation 2

Ratchet and Clank is a registered trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Developed by Insomniac Games ©2004 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Published by Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. "PS" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. is a registered trademark of Sony Corporation. All Rights Reserved.

KSPS1615/2CGA

PC GAMES ADDICT

REVIEWS

In which we put the new releases before our panel of PC gaming experts

Great expectations

The end of 2004 is a hard act to follow...

Numerous PC gaming genres were redefined, when most years only revolutionise one school of gaming. *Half-Life 2*, *Rome: Total War*, *Doom 3* and *World of Warcraft* all set new standards, and even niche genres such as theme park management overwent a major overhaul, with *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* taking a cute yet unspectacular series into a new era of 3D gorgeousness.

While there's some quality gaming in this month's review section to be had, after *WoW* and *Half-Life 2*, this roundup may feel like stepping down a gear. However, a couple of games in this issue's reviews section may still offer the fix you're after, despite not being as critically sound.

Vampire: Bloodlines may have been bug ridden to the point where it was shameful, but it also turned out to be one of the RPG experiences of 2004 (just). Few developers really manage to create such an excellent tale, script and set of characters as Troika have here. The delivery may have been a bit flawed, but when it's so engrossing, that doesn't matter.

Riddick was also a pleasant surprise, far surpassing the usual standards of movie-licensed games. Though it lacked a multiplayer aspect, *Escape from Butcher Bay* was stunning to behold and experience - beginning to end. Though it didn't quite eclipse *Doom 3*'s engine, it did offer more gameplay ideas and variety than Id's opus.

Not much hits the shelves through January and February, but as you'll see from our 2005 preview feature, PC gaming will start hotting up again in March as the weather cools down.

DAN TOOSE
EDITOR

Scrutinised this issue...

page 60

page 62

Alexander	67
Children of the Nile	60
Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay	64
Eve Online: Exodus	71
Football Manager 2005	72
Madden NFL 2005	73
Pro Evolution Soccer 4	73
Settlers: Heritage of Kings	68
Vampire: Bloodlines	62
Woms Forts: Under Siege	66
Zoo Tycoon 2	70

page 64

page 66

page 71

The PCGA review rig

There's no point reviewing new games on old PCs, otherwise we wouldn't be doing them justice. After all, how can you tell how well a game runs until you've seen it on the best machine available?

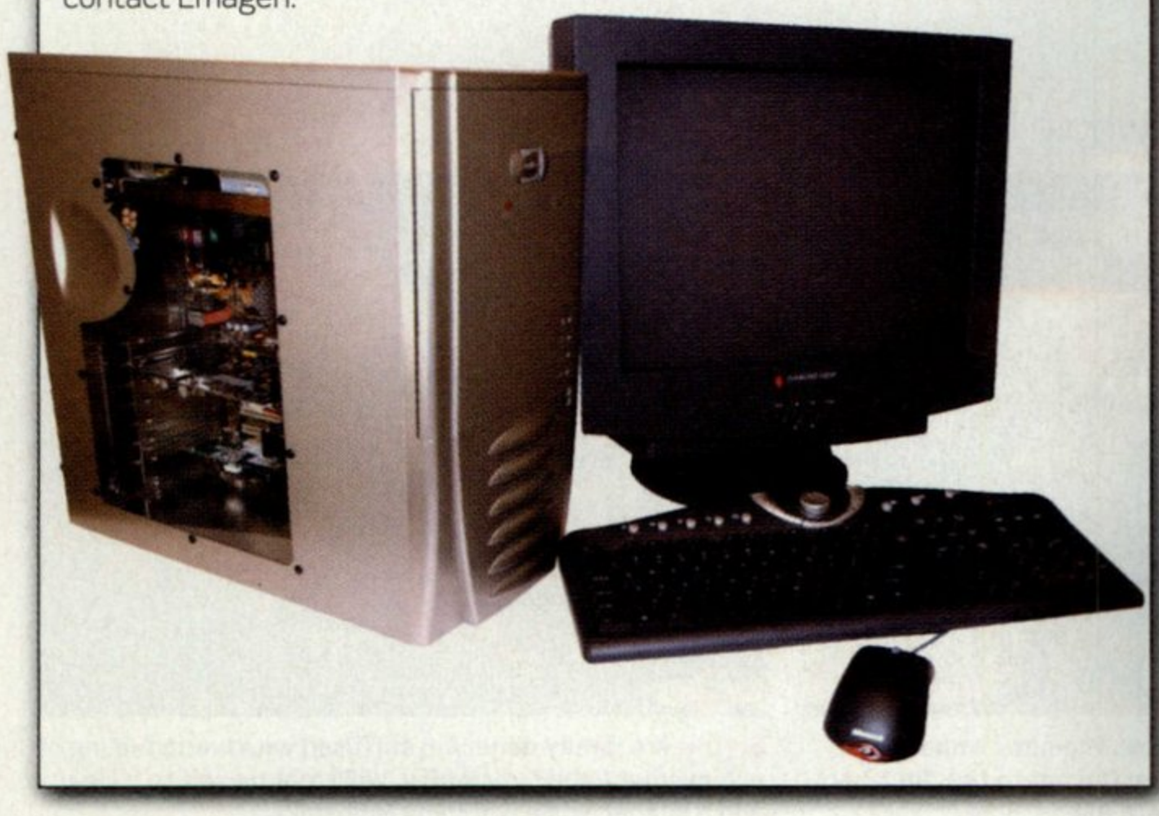
That's why we've turned to Emagen. Not just because they're able to keep working with an up to date PC to put the games through their paces, but also due to the fact that we're certain that they do the best system assembly in the business. Look at the picture below and you won't find a stray ATA cable or screw out of place. If you're serious about assembling the best machine you can, you'd do well to contact Emagen.

THE PC GAMES ADDICT REVIEW MACHINE:

- AMD Athlon XP 3000+
- Asus A7N8X Deluxe
- Corsair TWINX 512MB PC3200
- 128MB Radeon 9800 Pro
- Creative T7700 7.1 Speakers
- 19" Mitsubishi Flat CRT Monitor
- Western Digital WD800JB HDD
- 16X DVD, 52x24x52 CDRW
- Antec LanBoy Chassis
- Mitsubishi 104Key Black Keyboard

emagen

WWW.EMAGEN.COM.AU



Our Scoring System Explained

0-19% ABOMINABLE
Game crime. If you see this game do not approach. Call the appropriate authorities and have it removed.

20-49% POOR
A deeply troubled and troubling effort. Think twice, even if you find it lurking in the bargain bin.

50-69% MEDIOCRE
Fans of the theme or genre can extract limited fun if they persevere. Otherwise, put your wallet away.

70-84% GOOD
Consistently enjoyable but lacks that spark of genius. Superior alternatives are usually available.

85-89% EXCELLENT
A first-class title that guarantees great gaming. Fans of the genre will revel in it.

90%+ EXCEPTIONAL
Instant classic. These games are worth trying even if you don't normally like the genre.

THE PCGA AWARD

Just as our scoring system implies, if it gets 85% or higher, it's a game worthy of your hard earned dollar. Our **GOLD GAME** award willhelp you spot games **PCGA** recommend.

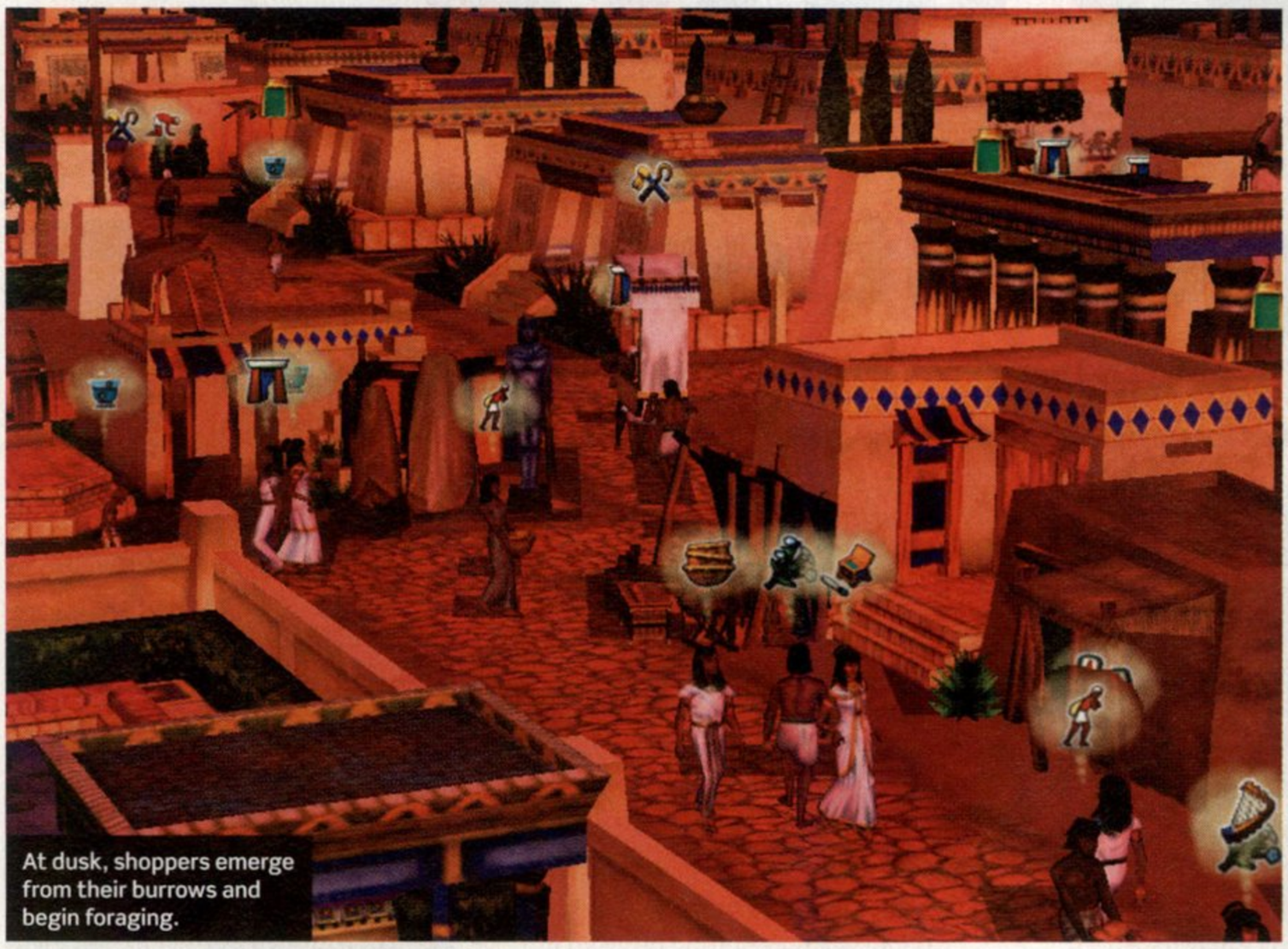
PC GAMES GOLD GAME ★★★★★

RIGHT TO REPLY

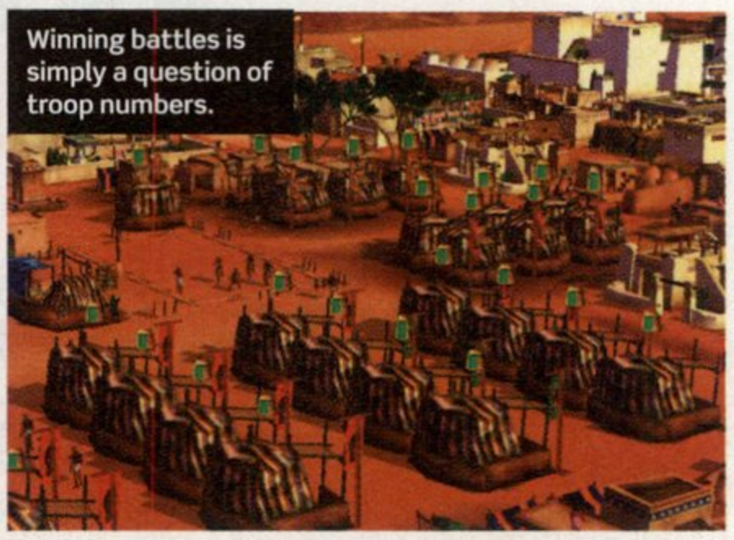
Think we've treated a game unfairly? Or perhaps we've gone too easy on a game. Address your redress to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** or write to us via snail mail by sending your correspondence to **Feedback, PC Games Addict, Derwent Howard, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355**

CHILDREN OF THE NILE

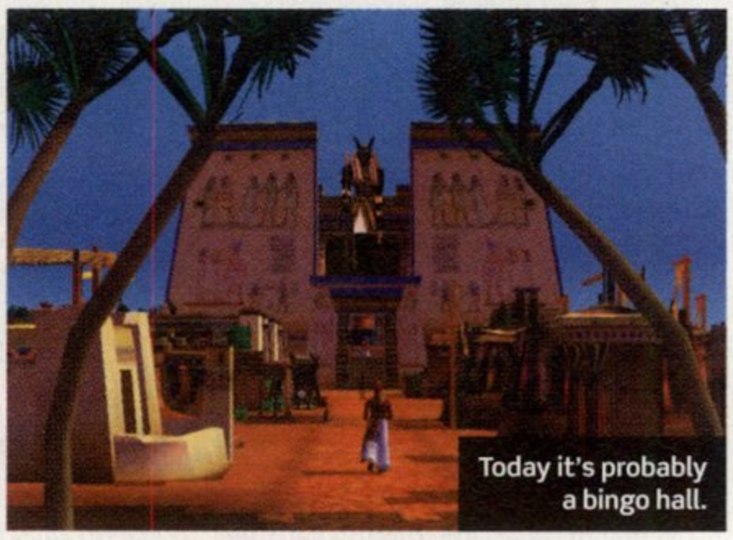
Reviewed by our resident mummies boy



At dusk, shoppers emerge from their burrows and begin foraging.



Winning battles is simply a question of troop numbers.



Today it's probably a bingo hall.

Whether your knowledge of ancient Egypt stems from high-school history classes, re-runs of *The Mummy Returns*, or Elizabeth Taylor's turn as Cleopatra, it's impossible to deny that this was a fascinating (and still somewhat mysterious) period in human history. Hieroglyphics, the pyramids, mummies, an obsession with animal-headed gods – it just makes you wonder what life was really like back then. In that respect, *Immortal Cities: Children of the Nile* is a surprisingly enlightening slice of sim gaming for those of us that aren't totally up with our mastabas and steles. Now you can foster your own Egyptian city from its very first mud brick, to the final piece of shiny limestone at the tip your own private giant pyramid.

Children of the Nile is certainly not the first of its kind. Exhuming a few video game tombs will turn up Sierra's *Pharaoh*, Dreamcatcher's *Egypt 1156 B.C.*, Interplay's *Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh*, and some other more unmemorable excursions down the Nile.

Nile dwellers are a remarkably tolerant lot

Pharaoh was developed by Impressions, the same studio that brought the world *Caesar* and *Zeus*, and it's these same folk that have gone on to form Tilted Mill, the studio behind *Children of the Nile*. Call this a 'spiritual successor in 3D' if you will, but *Children of the Nile* is more than just well-preserved gameplay. This is a city/world building sim with an astounding level of detail that manages to deliver entertainment and historical accuracy in the same sweeping mouse movement.

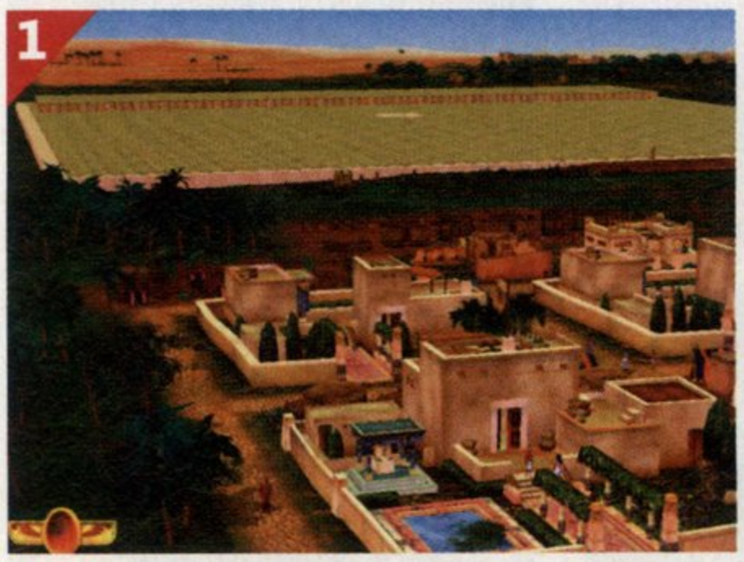
ON THE DISC Take our word for it, or play the *Children of the Nile* demo on the CD > Demos

Building up your city from scratch requires you understand how Egyptian society works, from the relationship between the farmers and the craftsmen, to the nobles and scribes, and the servants to the royal family. Thankfully, a rather hefty tutorial guides you through every tiny detail. It can be a lot to digest in one sitting, so it's even worth messing around in the campaign and then playing through the tutorial a second time to absorb the information that slipped by the first time. Once you have a

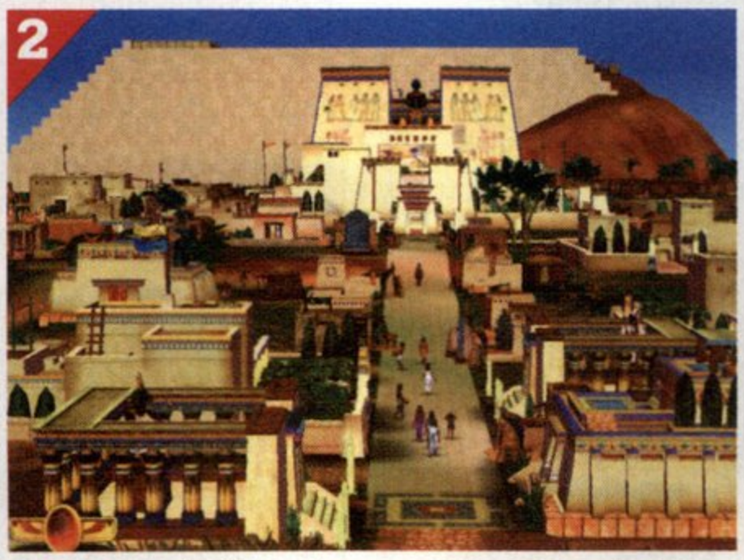
CHEOPS CHOP-CHOP

The long haul

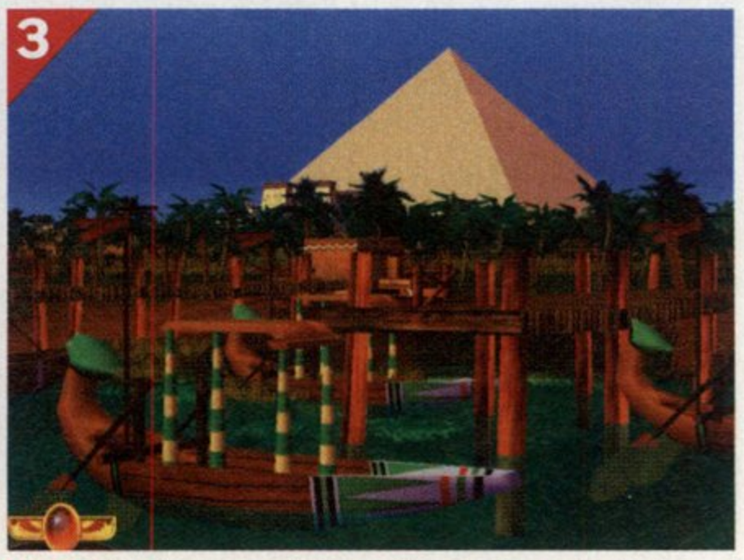
Building a Great Pyramid takes limestone, patience, and a whole lot of sacrifice



2.30PM Set game speed to 250% and commenced work on the game's largest structure, the Great Pyramid. Am currently missing Dr Quinn Medicine Woman. Damn.



4.30PM About half way there now. Hmmm, I wonder if it wouldn't have been better 300m further to the right? Am currently missing My Parents Are Aliens. Boo.



6.30PM It's finally done! Am suffused with warm feeling of achievement and superiority. Will treat myself to a cigar and a cognac while watching Hollyoaks.

TAKEN APART

"The eye of Horus sees all"

BLOCKHOUSES Flying in the face of scientific evidence, CotN's pyramids are built by armies of human labourers rather than UFO-borne extraterrestrials. It makes sense to house these labourers near the site in purpose-built workcamps, complete with bakeries, medical facilities, etc.
DEDICATED FOLLOWERS Besides the pyramids, cult temples are the biggest edifices. Like the ordinary temples they require a large basalt statue before they can be dedicated to a particular god. Without a dedication they'll still satisfy the spiritual needs of worshippers, but not as efficiently.
CASINO ROYALE Named after a famous casino chain, the pharaoh's palace is where your avatar hangs out when he's not being carried around the city in a perfumed sedan chair. Among purchasable home improvements are walls to keep the riff-raff out, a granary extension, and a menagerie.
CURSE OF THE MUMMY'S TOMB While the lower classes might be happy to toss their dead relatives in a convenient ditch, the toffs like to use tombs known as mastabi. Building these can put a serious strain on brick reserves but is crucial if you don't want a lot of narked nobs on your hands.
HARD NEWS There's not a lot of point warring and exploring if no-one at home ever gets to hear about it. Obelisks and stelae are the ancient Egyptian versions of press releases. Built of imported or local granite, each commemorates a particular exploit and brings prestige.

true grasp of how to manage the intricacies of life on the Nile, you can start concentrating on the delicate building process.

Thanks to a solid 3D engine and some very lively graphics, it's possible to see each individual person in your city go about their business. Watch the priest wander from shrine to shrine and tend to the gods, observe the farmer's children running through the streets back home, admire the Pharaoh (that's you) as he's carried about the city on a cushioned bed, and watch craftsmen going about their trade, right down to the hammering of their chisels . Zooming right in on the action actually gives you a front row seat to how the society operates, rather than your city management being represented as a list of stats on a page of papyrus. If the people are unhappy, it won't just pop up as an alert box - you'll see and hear them protesting outside your opulent palace.

The secret of success rests on the healthy production of bread and bricks. Bread is the game's currency, whilst bricks are needed for almost any kind of construction. Your Pharaoh's level of prestige determines how many educated people will be willing to work for you, and it's these 'graduates' who are the linchpins to keeping everything running smoothly. Scribes will collect the taxes; priests will handle healthcare, education and religious demands; commanders will look after your army; and overseers control the workforce. However, prestige decays over time, so you need to keep earning it or end up losing the graduates who are keeping your populace happy and functional. The micromanagement that is required with juggling these graduates and maintaining your prestige level can become a finicky and tiresome process. On top of this, progress can be amazingly slow. At the default game speed, you'll sometimes feel as though the little people are simply refusing to follow orders – lazing about their houses and eating fruit, when you have ordered a row of basalt statues be mined. Kicking the game up to its maximum speed becomes a necessity, desperate as you will be to get things moving and see actual progress - odd considering that most sim games are so overwhelming they require you slow things down to get a handle on all the details. In that respect, *Children of the Nile* is probably a bit too easy overall.

The good news is that *Children of the Nile* is delightful to play and a thoroughly absorbing experience, both visually and in terms of gameplay. Chances are you'll put up with its slow pace and frustrations in order to achieve those just-out-of-reach rewards, such as building a whopping great pyramid and having your Pharaoh's name etched into the history books. Now excuse me, I need to go build a gleaming reclining Anubis in the labourers' slums…

ELIOT FISH

Thumbnail Review

Ancient Egypt city-builder with Cleopatra looks

- ☑ Osiris
- ☑ Anubis
- ☑ Isis
- ☒ Scorpion king

Absorbing despite primitive war-making, slightly repetitive play, and easiness.

PC GAMES ADDICT Not just a face-lifted *Pharaoh*

IT'S › Engrossing › Educational › Slow as desertification

IT'S NOT › For warmongers › Multiplayer › All that challenging

Luxoriant

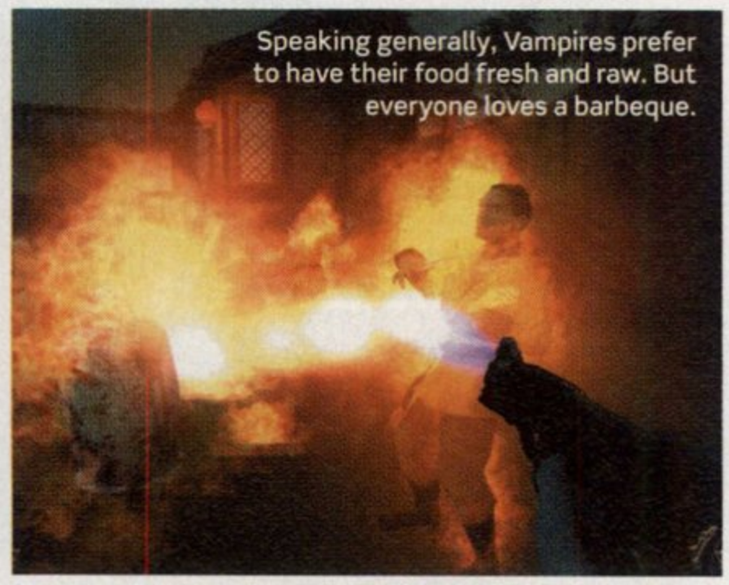
82%

■ **Release** Now ■ **Publisher** Sega ■ **Developer** Tilted Mill ■ **They say** 800MHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 800MHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.immortalcities.com ■ **Influenced by** Pharaoh, Cleopatra ■ **Alternatively** Sim City 4, Settlers IV

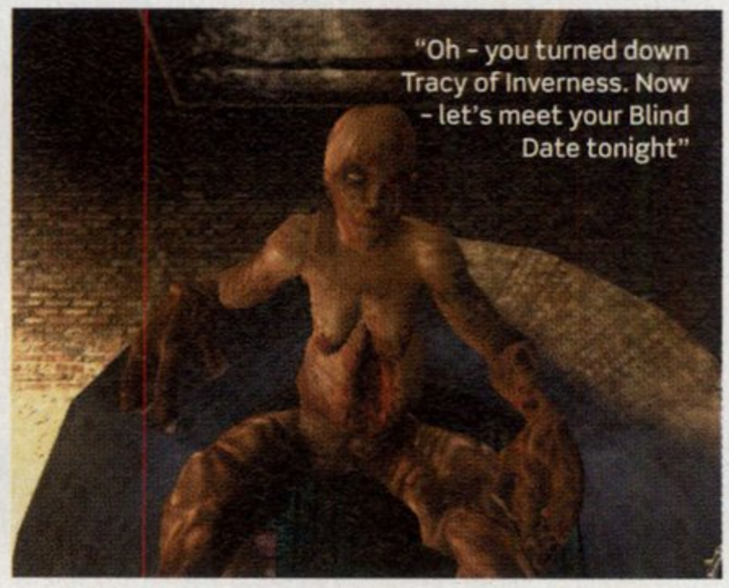
VAMPIRE: BLOODLINES

Something to get your teeth into

Vampiric weaknesses include a stake through the heart. Though, to be honest, that works on virtually everyone..



Speaking generally, Vampires prefer to have their food fresh and raw. But everyone loves a barbeque.



"Oh - you turned down Tracy of Inverness. Now - let's meet your Blind Date tonight"

Where have all the RPGs gone lately? With the arrival of *Bloodlines*, it feels that it's been far too long between drinks for the genre. Recently, our only real option for role-playing has been to log onto a MMORPG or excavate an old favourite game from the bottom drawer (Arx Fatalis is definitely worth playing, kids). Maybe this recent RPG void makes *Bloodlines* tug our heart strings just that little bit harder, but this is one of the most interesting RPGs in quite some time. Whilst *Vampire The Masquerade: Bloodlines* qualifies as more of an 'Action RPG' in the mold of *Deus Ex: Invisible War*, it's very much a game that will satisfy fans of the traditional RPG genre, such is the strength of its plot, characters, dialogue, and the ability for players to truly role-play their way through the game... well, up to a point.

Mature and satisfying NPC interaction is something that Troika do very well, and it's the strength of the writing that really helps to pull you into the World of Darkness (based on the Vampire The Masquerade pen and paper role playing game).

You play as a newly sired Vampire

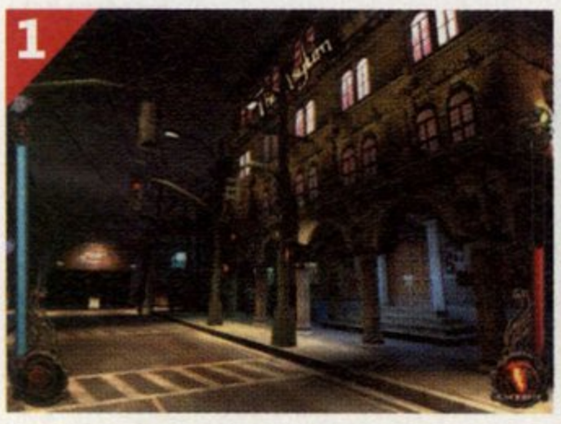
Here, vampires, were-wolves, and other mythological creatures, inhabit the dark corners of modern day society. They lurk down alleyways, hide in the sewer systems of the big cities, or even introduce themselves at fancy parties should you be sufficiently mesmerised by their charms to not notice their oddly pointed teeth.

In *Bloodlines*, you play as a newly sired Vampire – a 'Fledgling' who has to learn how to survive in the world without drawing attention to the fact that you're actually a blood-sucker. Character creation allows you to choose a clan and determine your preferred style of play. The choices range from the brutal Gangrel and Brujah, who would rather communicate with a clawed fist, to the Toreador, Tremere and Ventrue who are good-looking and suave (and the most human in appearance), and finally the Nosferatu and Malkavian who are either monstrous or mad, making it more advantageous to stay hidden and use stealth and technology to get what they want. The most important thing to any Vampire, however, is to maintain

BLOOD BANK

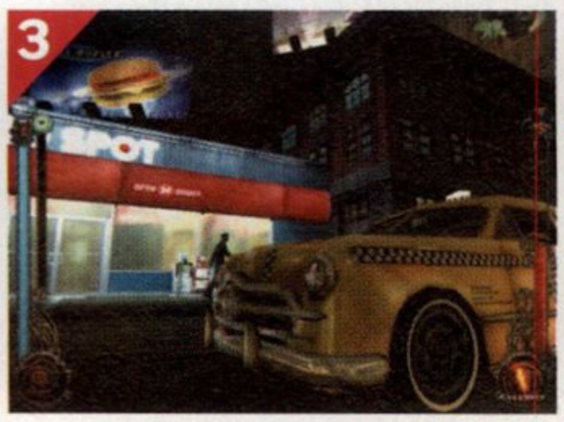
The thing I could never stand about Los Angeles...

Four central hubs provide the backbone of the game. They're packed full of bloodsuckers and prey.



Santa Monica is the start of the game. Why not hit the Asylum club for cheerful conversation, dancing and blood drinking.

Head downtown and soak up the atmosphere of this great city, then suck up plague-suffering street people.



Hollywood is most noticeable in *Vampire* for having the highest concentration of sleazy locations. Which is going some.

The last opened area, Chinatown is home to stuff which - er - to even describe properly would be a little too spoiler heavy.

"Do something amazing, suck blood"

OPEN ALL HOURS But don't expect loveable Ronnie Barker to try and sell you soapflakes. This cheery little cornershop does a roaring trade in automatic weaponry. Not all buildings are as easy to get into – especially those related to missions.

POLICE BRUTALITY The fuzz aren't normally much of a problem, unless you do something like – say – discharge a shotgun in the middle of the street. And what sort of fool would do that?

SURE SHOT Not automatic weaponry, but close. The shotgun is especially useful for fighting vampires, as normal bullets are relatively ineffective against the undead.

FARE DEAL The trusty taxi allows you to get around LA. For no charge it can move you between each of the hubs you've unlocked, as well as to special locations for one-off missions.

the 'Masquerade' – to not allow any human to clue in to the fact that Vampires exist. You'll also be faced with the constant struggle to hold on to your last few threads of Humanity, dare you slip into a frenzy and go on a troublesome killing spree or feeding frenzy.

As you make your way around the city, you'll meet a wonderful array of characters, some savvy to the Masquerade and others innocently oblivious to your hidden agenda. As you discover more about the different Vampire factions that are fighting for control over the city, you'll be faced with a multitude of choices. Where will your allegiance lie when it comes to the crunch?

Bloodlines was built using *Half-Life 2's* Source engine, however it's not likely the average gamer would notice. Aside from the brilliant character models and facial animation, the game looks decidedly average at times, and there are many visual glitches that disrupt the illusion. Despite this, *Bloodlines* is thick with atmosphere. The locations in the game are large and interesting enough to keep you excited to discover what's around the next corner, and there's enough world detail for it to be convincing. Computer terminals can be used via an authentic DOS-style interface, allowing you to hack for information or peruse emails; locks can be picked if you have the appropriate skill; innocent bystanders can be lured into the shadows for a quick feed should you need the blood; and every second doorway grants access to a new location, be it a nightclub, diner, hospital, convenience store, adult shop, seedy bar, strip club or motel, and so on.

Bloodlines' sheer number of characters, locations and intermingled sub-quests prove an intoxicating mix. Conversations allow you to coerce, seduce, intimidate or insult, giving you true control over your own character's personality, resulting in some very interesting conversations that will have you wanting to play through the game again to pursue alternative paths. It's lucky this interaction is so strong, because Bloodlines' combat is its weakest link. There's certainly variety here – you can be a spellcaster, master of firearms or melee weapons, or a hand-to-hand specialist – but the combat invariable ends up a messy button mash, or a frustrating fight against engine glitches, and the game swings more heavily towards combat as it reaches its conclusion. Characters get stuck on geometry, animations interfere with your actions, and the poor combat AI is brushed under the carpet by overwhelming the player with sheer numbers. Yet even despite these flaws, Bloodlines will have you hooked to the very end. The bugs in the game are bad (download the patch that's available before you play), but the writing is better, making it one of the most engaging role-playing games in recent years.

ELIOT FISH

Thumbnail Review

Explore your darker side in this gothic action-RPG

- ☑ Sexy goth girls
- ☑ Seedy nightlife
- ☑ Stats and stakes
- ☒ Dental plan

A rather severe infestation of bugs can't stop Bloodlines being a memorable role-playing experience.

PC GAMES ADDICT — A mature RPG with real bite

IT'S ›Well written ›Mature in content ›Buggy but patchable

IT'S NOT ›Spell-checked ›Forgettable ›For action whores

Plaqued

80%

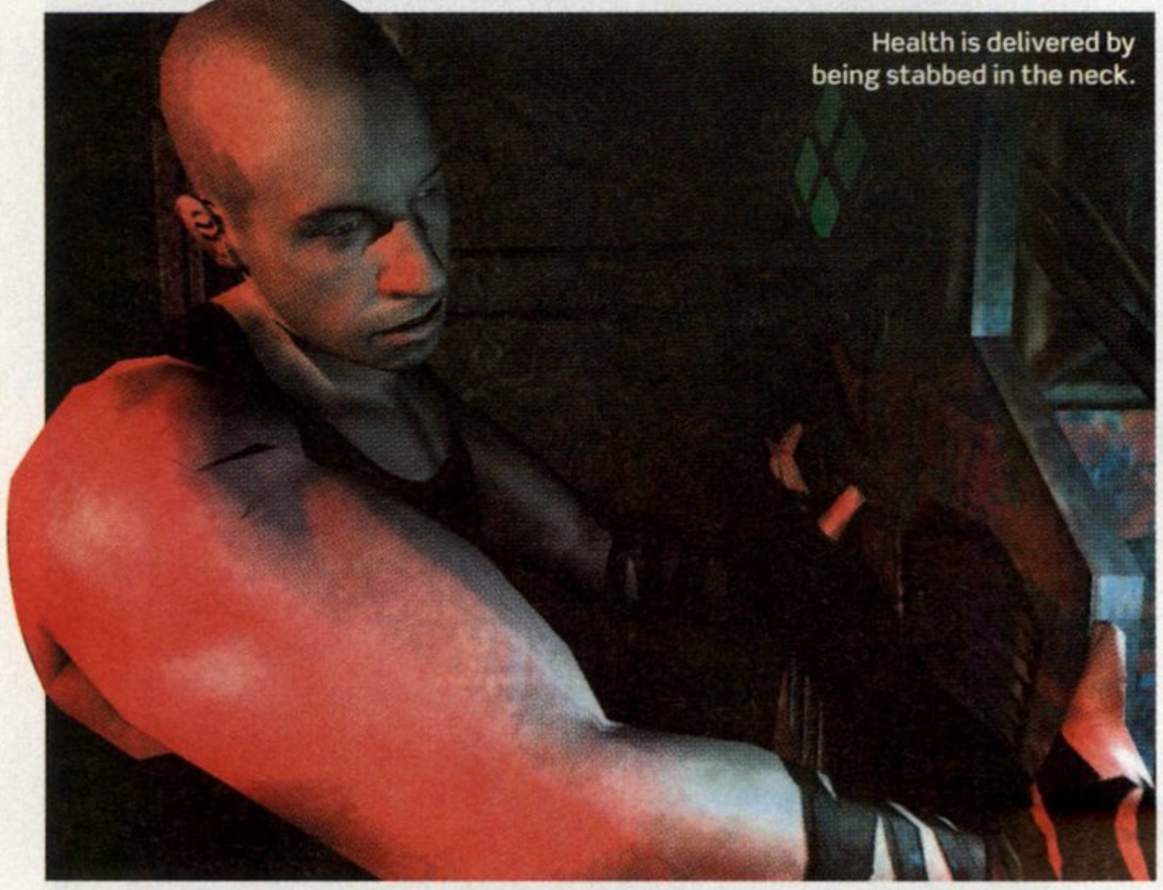
■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** Troika ■ **They say** 1.2GHz CPU, 384Mb RAM, DX9c 64Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 2GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, DX9c 64Mb 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.vampirebloodlines.com ■ **Community** http://bloodlines.dilapidation.com ■ **Influenced by** Deus Ex, Anne Rice ■ **Alternatively** Thief: Deadly Shadows

Review

CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK

Soliloquy of the meathead

PC GAMES GOLD GAME ★★★★★


Health is delivered by being stabbed in the neck.

This is the second best way to kill a man.

Flaming may ensue, but Cronicles of Riddick is in a lot of ways the FPS that *Doom 3* should have been. That's not to say that this shooter based on a license rivals Id's latest offering on a technical level (though it's still A-grade), *CoR* presents the player with innovative new ways to deal with old problems that result in a more engaging 'hands on' first-person experience.

Thumbnail Review

Vin Diesel as the baddest man in space. Much hitting.

- ☑ Fight
- ☑ Cellblock
- ☑ Chat
- ☒ Pretty girls

An impressive first-person shooter that helps us rethink what these games should be all about.

As in the movie of the same name, Riddick spends the game in the galaxy's highest security prison colony for the lowest malevonent scum to plague the stars. The result feels less run-and-gun, and more like a brutal high-stakes game of hide & seek.

Neck breaking and slapping people in the chops comes naturally to space miscreant Riddick, who finds himself imprisoned on a rather uncomfortable prison-planet. The occupants of this prison are fairly 'hardened' and brawling is bread and butter to the happy-go-murderous crew of 'the slam'.

> He shatters spines and beats men to death

Hand-to-hand combat has never been particularly elegant or engaging in first-person shooters, but in *Riddick* the experience is solid, violent and believable. Fights are often short and always deadly. Riddick turns guns on their owners, blasting off faces. He shatters spines and beats men to death in the filthy bowels of the space-prison. It's all rather credible in an ugly, bloody way.

Riddick himself is a deeply silly, skull-thumping, jaw-breaking, muscle-flexing character. Vin Diesel's voiceover fulfils this role with admirably deep-throated rumbling. The first lines of the game refer to the disconnection of a man's head in a fairly unfriendly manner, and *Riddick* maintains this tone throughout.

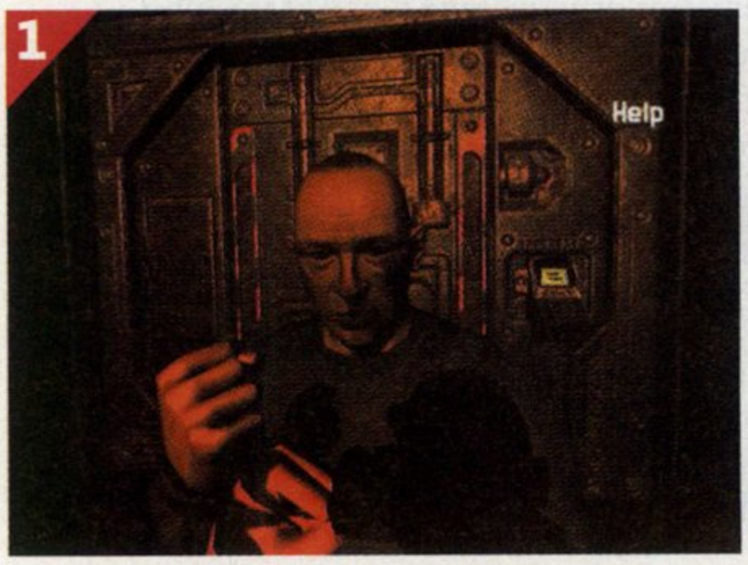
First-person shooters rarely manage a tone of wryness amid the gore, but when they do it's refreshing and addictive. Riddick's deadpan machismo has a peculiar charm to it and seems to come off even better in a game format than it has done in film. Could Diesel be the first actor to be better as his artificial 3D self than as the genuine article?

You wander about, collecting

LET'S FIST AGAIN

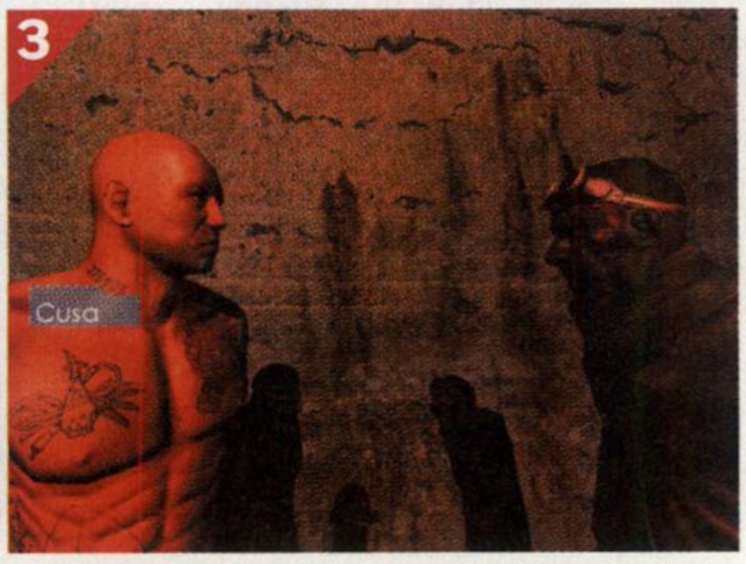
The bigger they come...

...the more it stings when they hit you



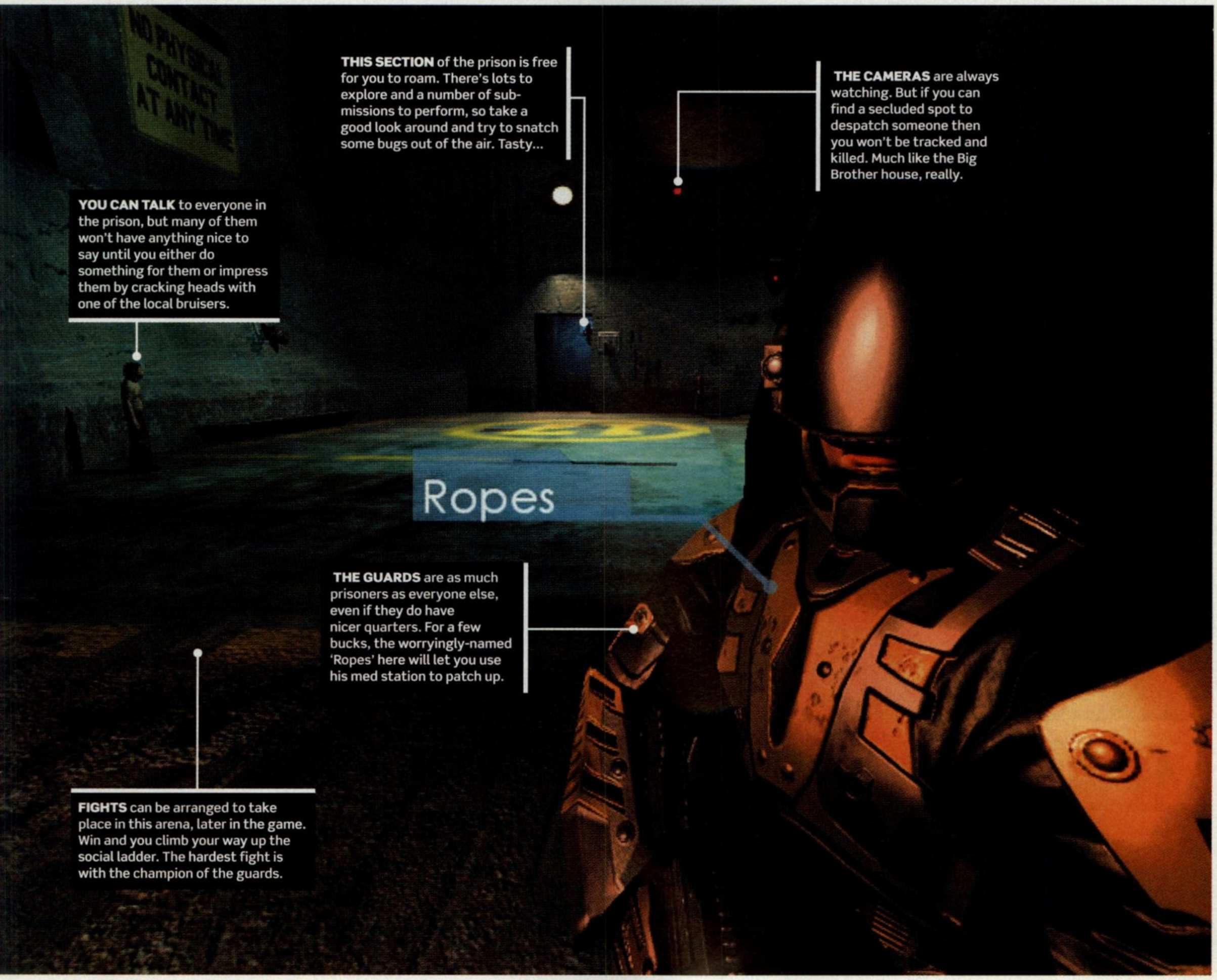
The technician is no match for Riddick and a few smacks to the face will send him sprawling. Unfortunately he'll set off an alarm, too.

Guards really need to be dealt with using heavy weaponry, but get close and you might be able to take the mutha down. This fellow isn't that hard.



Most of the inmates suffer from a glass jaw, and so long as they don't kill you first it's possible to take them down with a few choice blows.

"Watch yourself in the showers..."



THIS SECTION of the prison is free for you to roam. There's lots to explore and a number of sub-missions to perform, so take a good look around and try to snatch some bugs out of the air. Tasty...

THE CAMERAS are always watching. But if you can find a secluded spot to despatch someone then you won't be tracked and killed. Much like the Big Brother house, really.

YOU CAN TALK to everyone in the prison, but many of them won't have anything nice to say until you either do something for them or impress them by cracking heads with one of the local bruisers.

THE GUARDS are as much prisoners as everyone else, even if they do have nicer quarters. For a few bucks, the worryingly-named 'Ropes' here will let you use his med station to patch up.

FIGHTS can be arranged to take place in this arena, later in the game. Win and you climb your way up the social ladder. The hardest fight is with the champion of the guards.

objects that may or may not have some use later on and talking to people who will either tell you what to smash or tell you that they're going to smash you at some point in the future. Using these characters and their environment becomes essential to Riddick's progress. There are some choices to be made and some limited conversational paths to go down. The voice acting is excellent and some of the posture and movement of the characters is gorgeous. I don't think there's ever been a game where a man smokes a cigarette and then grinds it under the heel of his boot with quite as much casual conviction as they do in Butcher Bay. Details like this are the kind of thing that all games should boast, but few can muster. Characters saunter with cock-sure nonchalance, they cower to hide their scarred faces in shadow, or lean forward to offer a forbidding 'f*** you'. Riddick is chock full of vulgar detail.

The stealth doesn't always work, despite Riddick's capacity to see in the dark. When it does work the stealth kills are brutal, and being hunted with flashlights adds tension. Quite what the deal is with Riddick's magic eyes is never made clear, and not in a fun and mysterious way, just in a way that makes for mild perplexity. This happens a few times throughout, with some of the storytelling (in what is otherwise a decent plot) being a little clumsy. Gun-based combat is something of a letdown after the hand-to-hand, too, to the point where the game feels more like *Thief : Deadly Shadows* and less like a shooter.

It's genuinely surprising to find an FPS whose voice acting, character interaction and brawling are its strongest assets. More surprising still in a film licence and console conversion. *Riddick* has an unapologetic, mature attitude and it's hard not to appreciate that.

The lack of multiplayer prevents this from being a must-have FPS, but it's been ambitious enough to raise the bar in other ways nonetheless.

JIM ROSSIGNOL

PC GAMES ADDICT Sneaking, vertebrae-snapping

IT'S ›Brutal ›Surprising ›Gritty

IT'S NOT ›A big softy ›Flowers ›Multiplayer capable

Punchy

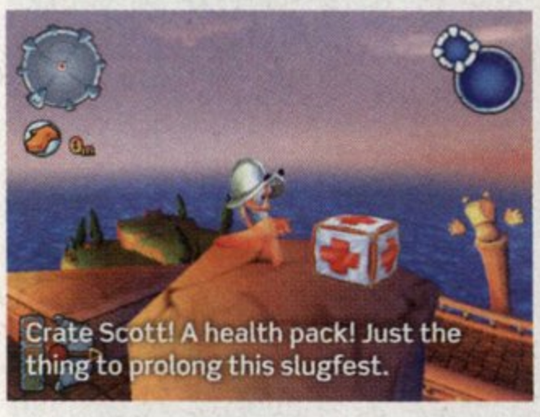
85%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Vivendi ■ **Developer** Starbreeze ■ **They say** 1.5GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 3D card ■ **We say** 2.5GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, DirectX 9 compatible 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.riddickgame.com ■ **Influenced by** The Film, Deus Ex ■ **Alternatively** Deus Ex: Invisible War

WORMS FORTS: UNDER SIEGE

Bricks and stones will break your bones, as will a Concrete Donkey

Cruelty to animals, the old and religious figures - The classic Worms formula.


Crate Scott! A health pack! Just the thing to prolong this slugfest.

Crate collecting can be too tricky and arduous to be of use.

Familiar gizmos, like the parachute, return. Yippee!

Movies have kept pace with technology over the past century, incorporating sound, then colour, then 3D. That last innovation is today only seen down at the Imax; partly because it's distracting and redundant, but mainly because the goggles are a pain. *Worms Forts: Under Siege* requires no fancy headgear, except perhaps your thinking cap. Like *Worms 3D*, it's expanded from the 2D plane into a whole new dimension of hurt. Unlike *Worms 3D*, it's managed to reign in some of its unwieldy possibilities though a more coherent focus on strategy.

In every *Worms* game up to now, everything in the playing field has been vulnerable to player fire, and could be whittled away right down to the waterline. Now, it's only the player-created networks of fortifications that can be blown away. If cut off from the central citadel, they'll explode on their own; the weakest link is now as inviting a target as an enemy worm. Destroy the citadel, and it's game over too.

This feature goes beyond the sandbagging of your old-school *C&C*-style RTS, as most worm weapons can only be fired from pillars of your fort network. The bigger the weapon, the bigger the tower needed to support it, and the bigger the base as a pre-requisite. Specialised buildings confer bonuses (more crates, re-spawning worms, greater damage...), and offer themselves as another delectable vulnerability. It all might sound restrictive, but it's just structure, and it's generally a structured challenge that makes any good game.

Under Siege has a more sedate pace

The deficiencies of this new *Worms* paradigm are the stock stable of 3D gaming bugbears: camera, control, comprehension. The third-person view is standard, with first person and map available for scanning and attack. Despite the clear, yet lively environments (shades of *WoW* here), getting around is an awkward ordeal. Undulating terrain is the biggest threat, hiding worms and precious bonus crates alike. Clunkiness is another caveat, as mis-judged wind direction or range-finding can render a mighty weapon impotent.

For all this frenzied building and blasting, *Under Siege* has a more sedate pace than its predecessors. Bjorn Lynne's score reflects this, with more ambient anthems hinting at the ancient setting, and, ironically, the glacial pace of siege warfare. The turn-based, time-limit style of play still offers a good balance between contemplation and frenzied violence, but there's way too much ceremony attached to every action. The design and animation of the worms and their weapons is more whimsical than ever, but this just makes it harder to tell what you're aiming at.

In a way, this is a return to form for *Worms*, as the side-on action has merely been swapped for a top-down dynamic. It's painfully obvious that the main camera should have been locked to the map view, saving endless disorientation in the samey environments. It just doesn't feel as smooth, or as fast on its feet as previous episodes - perhaps that sort of virtuosity awaits us in the recently announced *Worms 4*. This is an intriguing re-invention of the franchise, though it feels more like a prototype than a finished product.

JAMES COTTEE

PC GAMES ADDICT A drawn-out blood-bath

IT'S › Tricky › Strategic › Slooooooooooow

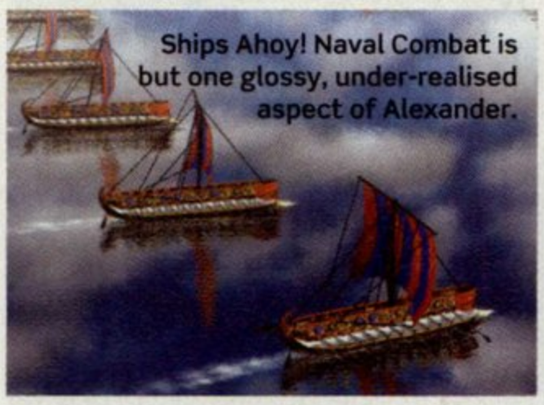
IT'S NOT › Quick › Easy › Quite the same

Parasitic

61%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** THQ ■ **Developer** Team 17 ■ **They say** 1 Ghz CPU, 256 MB RAM, 64 MB 3D Card ■ **We say** 1.5 Ghz CPU, 512 MB RAM, 128 MB 3D Card
■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet ■ **Link** www.wormsforts.com ■ **Influenced by** Worms World Party, Spartacus ■ **Alternatively** Worms World Party, Crossbows & Catapults

A variety of combat formations are available to assist your conquering impulses.


Ships Ahoy! Naval Combat is but one glossy, under-realised aspect of Alexander.

Not unlike something a dog might eat for it's break-fast.

If you think the dialogue looks goofy, wait 'til you hear it out loud.
- Philip -
- My son, I'm full of pride. While I was away, you have shown all our opponents that Macedonia is great and strong as never before. All who waiver have seen our strength and will now support us. The rebels are doomed. You have demonstrated true leadership skills and ability to rule. There is nothing more a father can ask from his son.

ALEXANDER

Oliver Stone declares Total War on strategy gaming.

With a career built on controversy, Oliver Stone's greatest legacy may be the definitive botching of the story of Alexander the Great. For a man with such a complex family life, who compressed so much achievement into so little time, who invented the art of war almost single-handedly, there was so much cinematic potential. Yet Ollie was mostly concerned with whether 'Lex was gay, and if so, how gay. It's more than fitting that a game that happens to follow in the film's wake clearly surpasses it. It is still hamstrung by convention and adherence to the tepid subject matter, and rises above the dismal merely to achieve mediocrity.

To look at, this is definitely a game that matches the grandeur of any sword-and-sandal epic. Scores of little men run about at your command, whirling their slings and clutching their oddly shaped shields. When armies clash, the battlefield is littered with bodies and equipment, bringing to mind the chaotic adventures of *Asterix & Obelix*. Passing clouds can be seen reflecting in lakes, and the architecture of the ancient world is painted in with life and colour.

It's a shame, then, that Alexander's mighty armies behave like so many undisciplined insects. As in *Rome: Total War*, much attention must be paid to force mix, troop placement, formation, timing and terrain. This was not enough for the game designers, however, and we're also obliged to go through the time-worn rigmarole of base building, tech-trees, and mining for gold. When your peasants are literally splitting rocks before your eyes, it makes for a less than subtle reminder as to the busywork behind every campaign. Fortunately, their production and assignment can be automated, freeing your time for wrestling with pathfinding problems.

No big-name talent here

Discipline is an issue, too. Mighty Alexander, astride his man-eating horse, is highlighted by a shaft of sunlight descending from the sky. This means that even without the hot-keys, you can easily find the spot where he's chosen to stay put and get into a losing battle with some enemy rabble. The survival of hero units is, of course, a requisite for any level, meaning they're as much a weakness as a they are a strength.

The writing is weak, and the voice acting is worse. No big-name talent here, and the slowly roasting hams at the mic lack the camp edge that could have made their awkward banter tolerable. The sound effects suffer from the MIDI keyboard syndrome, swiftly becoming repetitive. Then there's the music. Vangelis has a knack for the obtuse and the soporific, and his looping score is utterly apropos. Painful if you're not a fan of '70s new age style synth.

It may boast a multitude of units in one battle, but *Alexander* doesn't have any force multipliers in today's strategy market. *Rome* is streets ahead, and the Alexander campaign in *Thrones & Patriots* is but one part of an upgrade to *Rise of Nations*. *Alexander's* engine has seen better days, too, back when it was animating massed forces of *Cossacks*. It's not abysmal, but there's no clear reason to recommend it.

JAMES COTTEE

PC GAMES ADDICT Like Oliver's efforts, lacking...

IT'S › Shaky › Also a movie › Not quite as bad as the movie

IT'S NOT › Rome › Cossacks › Realistic or compelling

Greating

50%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** GSC ■ **They say** 1.5 Ghz CPU, 512 MB RAM, 64 MB 3D card ■ **We say** 2 Ghz CPU, 512 MB RAM, 128 MB 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet ■ **Link** Alexander-thegame.com ■ **Influenced by** Rome: Total War, Oliver Stone ■ **Alternatively** Rome: Total War, Warcraft III

Battles look much better up close, but are still chaotic to watch

Not your average mission goal - 'Stop the rain'. For real.

THE SETTLERS: HERITAGE OF KINGS

Have Blue Byte settled on the old formula?

Barring EA Sports games and the 'Ooh-it-must-be-Christmas-again' updates, it is a rare franchise that survives to its fifth installment. It's an even rarer one that continues to evolve in the right direction twelve years after making its debut. Add to this the fact we're talking about a German game traditionally based on a lots of hexagons and deeply geeky geography theory and you have the computer game equivalent of a duck-billed platypus.

Thumbnail Review

More of a resource managers delight than a wargame

- ☑ Peasants
- ☑ Soldiers
- ☑ Castles
- ☒ Action

This is one for management purists that find actual conflict a 'minor detail' of warfare.

The Settlers has always been more about resource management and land grabbing than battle strategy – something that has limited its appeal outside Germany when pitted against *Civilization* and *Command & Conquer*. And while this balance has been tweaked significantly for *Heritage of Kings*, *The Settlers* remains an old school strategy game that's true to its roots.

Too easy for true devotees of the Settlers

It's played out on a very pretty faux-isometric map complete with rustling trees and waterfalls and your serfs scurry around collecting wood, stones, clay sulphur and iron. These may be turned into various buildings, which, complete with detailed upgrade paths allow you to construct military units, build defences and generally improve your base(s). There is money as well of course and with it a vital but mostly automated micromanagement

ON THE DISC Think you've got that knack for running other people's lives? Find out for sure > Demos

game – the amount of cash you have is inherently linked to the number of workers, which in turn is governed by your ability to support them with structures to live and work in. It's an enjoyable tried and tested formula that Blue Byte has honed over the years.

The problems start when you try and understand what *HoK* is trying to be - and that is essentially more accessible and familiar to today's hordes of *Warcraft* players. And it's definitely the way to go, but it

ERECTIONS

Settlers pioneered these pillars of gaming

Stock standard strategy game structures? Blue Byte wrote this script!

1

Headquarters - It all starts here, as this is the foundation of your entire settlement, and a bastion of gothic beauty.

2

University - Now in reality, serfs were kept ignorant on purpose, but in this game, the stupid can be turned into the scholarly.

3

Sawmill - Defoliation is something mankind has excelled at. Without a sawmill, building is a crude log artform.

4

Residence - Serfs pack into these buildings, until they're trained into a superior unit that generally has its own spefic structure.

"Settling into hostile areas..."

Menu
F2 Diplo.
F3Tribute
F4 Quest
F5Stats
1/14
KEEPING SAFE This is the bastion of masonary that the enemy wants to keep from us, but those walls aren't so strong as they look. A rabble of infantry at the bottom will burn it down swiftly.
ARMY ANTS Yes, they're tiny, but size doesn't matter in this case... Unless it's the size of your army that's in question. Having masses of troops is more important than creating the right blend of units.
Ari
Helias
Erec
Dario
HIDDEN TREASURE Well, actually it's not hidden, but it may as well be when zoomed out like this. There's a lot of detail there that's easy to miss with so much to see on screen at once.
MIMIC THE MAGIC What do you know, here's some spell powers usable by the hero units, new to Settlers. Of course, it's not at all new to War III, and while undeniably adding depth, it's cheap.
120
+70
113
492
441
654
500
100%
22/75
0
0
495/600
4
32
DARIO

seems the developers were petrified of losing the established fan base and only made half the changes they needed to.

In a RTS battle game you need simple resource management, lots of varied troops and abilities and the potential for great looking scraps, total chaos and much swearing. In *HoK* you have a time-consuming resource structure to deal with, comprised of five resources as opposed to say *Warcraft's* two and there are only a few troops types (swordsmen, cavalry and archers) who aren't vastly different.

The main problem however comes from map and mission design, especially in the earlier stages of the game. After an initially steep learning curve, you settle down into a series of long missions on big maps where there is usually absolutely no hurry to do anything. You can set up the resource gathering serfs and because the resources are so plentiful (to facilitate the expanded army-building aspect) you never have to pay them any attention again and can wander off for a real life cup of tea.

Slurp.

Come back half an hour later and your coffers are full to bursting and all semblance of mission design is redundant. You can build any structure, recruit a massive army of swordsmen (so many they can deal with anything) and any battle tactics become irrelevant. Enemies and your own troops die with a colour coded ethereal puff of smoke but they are all so small you don't really feel for any of them. There are heroes, complete with special abilities, to add some character and variety but they all look too similar and small, and if they die, they get resurrected after a while because they appear in the next chapter of the story. The less said about the 'story' the better – it's not only woefully clichéd but sounds like it is narrated by the losers of an British Regional Accent Impression competition.

So all in all on an analytical level *The Settlers V* is a bit of a dog's dinner. But there is something about it that, initially at least, keeps you coming back. Occasionally you see tantalising glimpses of a brilliantly balanced, limited number of troops based strategy / resource game and those missions are challenging, rewarding and fun. But then it's almost as if the developers and marketing department re-read the original brief – 'Make it more accessible!' – and dumbed it all down. The result is likely something too complex for casual RTS gamers and too easy for true devotees of *The Settlers*. Roll on number VI...

HILARY BRISS

PC GAMES ADDICT Blasts of fun marred by attrition

IT'S › Slow paced › Detailed › A bit confused

IT'S NOT › Visceral › Battle-focused › A real war game

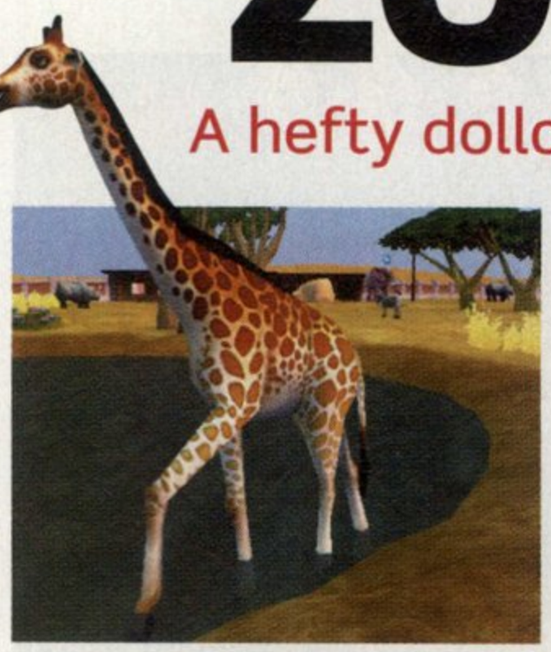
Whimsical

78%

■ **Release** February 24 ■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** Blue Byte ■ **They say** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 2GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Online ■ **Link** www.bluebyte.net ■ **Influenced by** Its four predecessors ■ **Alternatively** Port Royale 2, Warrior Kings Battles

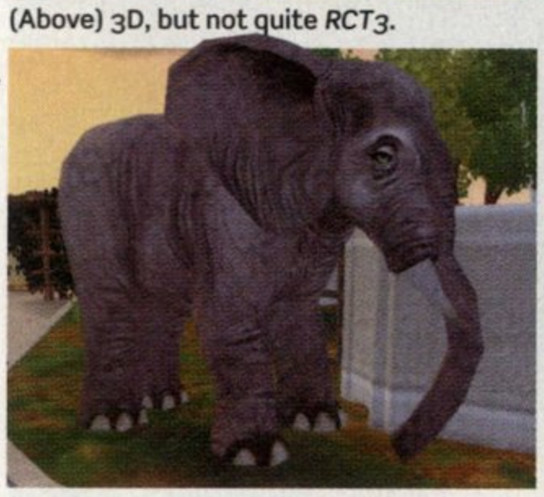
ZOO TYCOON 2

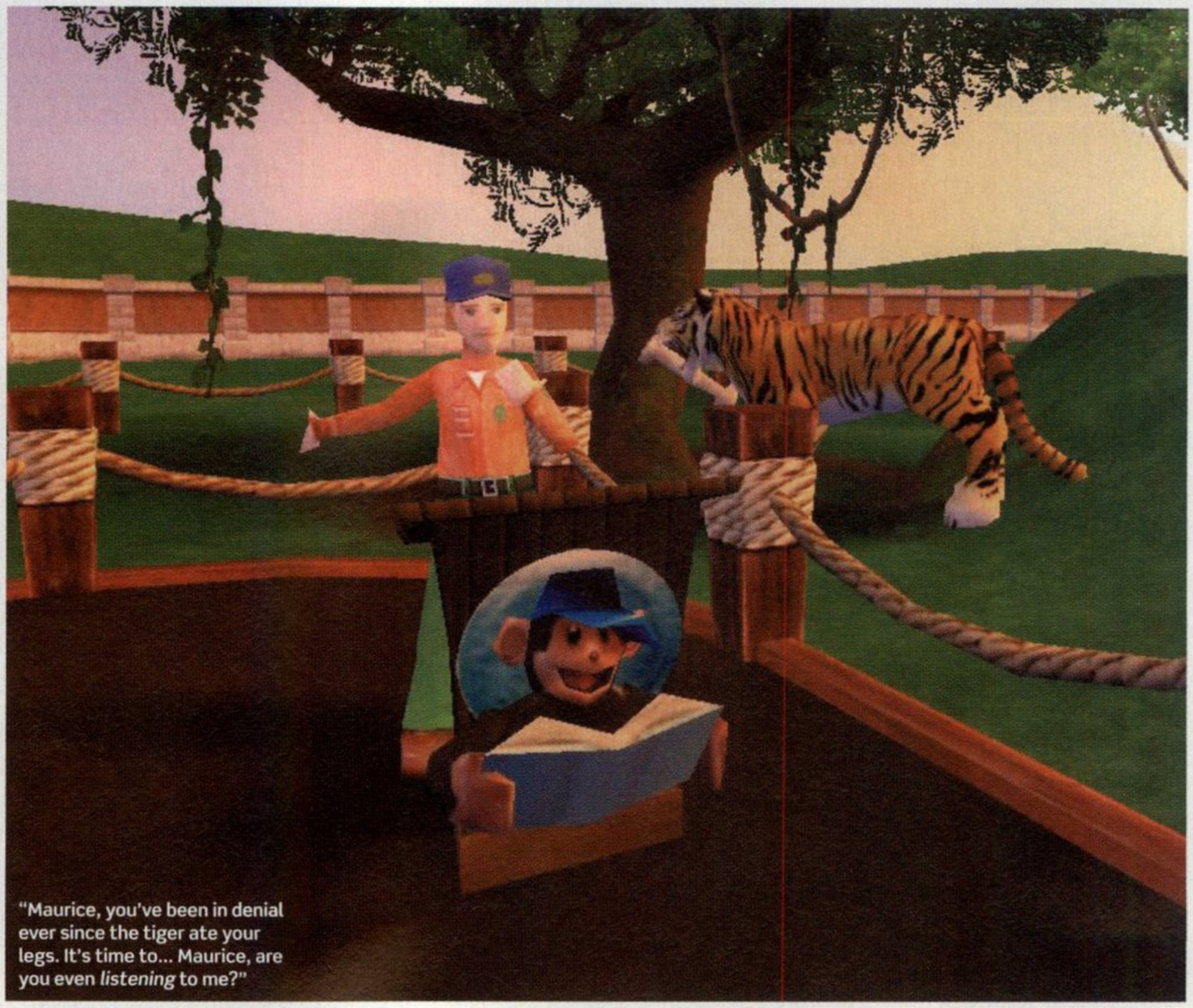
A hefty dollop of monkey business. And tigers' and elephants' too



Giraffes have mincing down to a fine art.

(Above) 3D, but not quite *RCT3*.





"Maurice, you've been in denial ever since the tiger ate your legs. It's time to... Maurice, are you even *listening* to me?"

Guessing time. Which of the following is the big new feature in *Zoo Tycoon 2*? Is it a) Animal Poacher Mode, in which you send goons to kidnap baby pandas for the amusement of your guests? B) Darwin Deathmatch Mode, pitting lions vs tigers in a battle to extinction? Or c) Zookeeper Mode, which increases the simulation's depth by giving you the chance to personally scoop your animals' poop? Keep reading for the unexpected answer.

Zoo Tycoon is the only *Whatever Tycoon* series besides *Rollercoaster* that has really managed to carve out its own niche. No longer are your virtual visitors the centre of attention; the focus instead lands on managing the lives of the many animals in your care. The wrong enclosures, the wrong toys, the wrong bunkmates – slip up anywhere and you end up with miserable critters, bored visitors and a hefty fine from the Powers That Be. Where the original *Zoo Tycoon* went badly wrong was in making your menagerie so fickle that you found yourself playing Jeeves to the entire animal kingdom, rather than playing as a virtual PT Barnum.

Keeping your animals happy is still crucial, but doing so is now much more straightforward. A zookeeper palette gives you a full list of all the things that each animal might like, with a *Sims* style view of each animal's stats showing exactly how they feel about food, drink and gawping kiddies. Likewise, editing the landscape is now as easy as painting it. Two big improvements on last time.

Unfortunately, *Zoo Tycoon 2* lets itself down badly with its new 3D engine. Suffering from both low-poly graphics and clumsy controls, you almost start feeling nostalgic for sprites and isometric landscapes. More pressingly, while the novelty of the frolicking exhibits soon wears off, the glitches stay painfully in your face – from zookeepers getting caught on fences, to guests ignoring the escaped elephant taking a dump by the ice-cream stall.

Darwin Deathmatch Mode pitting lions v tigers

Speaking of dump, I must mention *Zoo Tycoon*'s most amusing feature. If you answered c) at the start, then give yourself a pat on the head from a nearby cow. Heading back to the floor in *Zoo Tycoon 2*'s first-person mode lets you do anything your zookeepers can – not just shovelling up the brown gold, but filling food bowls and grooming your animals. It's a throwaway addition, but a fun one – especially in such an otherwise disappointingly by-the-numbers sequel.

Fans who lapped up *Marine Mania* and *Dinosaur Digs* will no doubt love *Zoo Tycoon 2*, but there's precious little for the rest of us to get interested in. Animal lover or not, in the wake of *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3*, only true conservationists should choose this particular trip to the zoo over a third ride on the Big Dipper.

RICHARD COBBETT

PC GAMES ADDICT — Proof that 3D isn't always better

IT'S
- Now in 3D
- Reasonable fun
- Uglier than before

IT'S NOT
- Animal magnetism
- Poop
- As frustrating as Zoo Tycoon

Dolittle

60%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Microsoft ■ **Developer** Blue Fang ■ **They say** 733Mhz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 1.5GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.microsoft.com/games/zootycoon/zoo2 ■ **Community** zoo.ogresnet.com ■ **Influenced by** Theme Park ■ **Alternatively** Rollercoaster Tycoon 3

A new interface makes combat quicker.

Deep space battles are mesmerising.

Big guns. Very big guns. Yes.

EVE: EXODUS

Tweaks, bugs and the long haul

EVE isn't for everyone. But the people who have written it off as a 'mining simulator' haven't bothered to realise that this is a persistent, ongoing world. The *EVE* of today isn't the one you played a year, or even three months ago. *EVE* is getting gradually closer to that perfect vision of a space game where anything is possible.

Exodus is the latest in a series of major augmentations. A free expansion pack, it's like a sequel but without a break in continuity. The world goes on, but there are far-reaching changes. *Exodus* is about an evolution that few games are capable of.

Developers CCP have created a vast universe. It's a single entity, devoid of the shards (servers) that break up the likes of Norrath or Paragon City. Everyone in the 55,000-strong population of *EVE* is in the same galaxy, together. This creates some problems for CCP. There's no chance to test their work on a single shard, and their team isn't big enough to deal with the huge beta processes that games like *World of Warcraft* have gone through. *Exodus* is the underdog with some problems.

It's misunderstood and, right now, is getting flak for having a lot of bugs. And that's a shame, because there are some elements here that confirm the fact that *EVE* is one of the most important games around today. For those of us who understand the conversation *EVE* is having about what it is to be a game, and more specifically an MMO, *Exodus* sings a song of the future.

Exodus sings a song of the future

There are new ships, skills, baddies and missions. There's the basis for smuggling and the introduction of contraband. There are even 'dungeons' – Deadspace Complexes – for players to indulge in some spectacular non-player-killing carnage. The graphics have been overhauled and there's an improved user interface, including a beautiful and intuitive radial menu for controlling spaceship actions. *Exodus* adds *detail* and lots of it. (When was the last time you flew through a lightning storm *inside* a nebula?)

CCP know that they now have to work inwards, to create a more intricate universe, to make it richer and more diverse for beginners, while tougher and more dangerous for the players who've been making this world their own. *Exodus* brings us more goals, both epic and far reaching, like building and maintaining space stations, and immediate and utilitarian, like running a player corporation more efficiently or making trading possible from deep-space.

Even with the agent missions broken and the complexes unbalanced there is a wealth of excellence here. Flaws will soon be patched. Whatever the future holds for *EVE*, *Exodus* is the confirmation that it has momentum, staying power and the kind of vision that few games even glimpse in their short lifetimes. This one is here to stay.

JIM ROSSIGNOL

PCGAMES ADDICT **God is in the details**

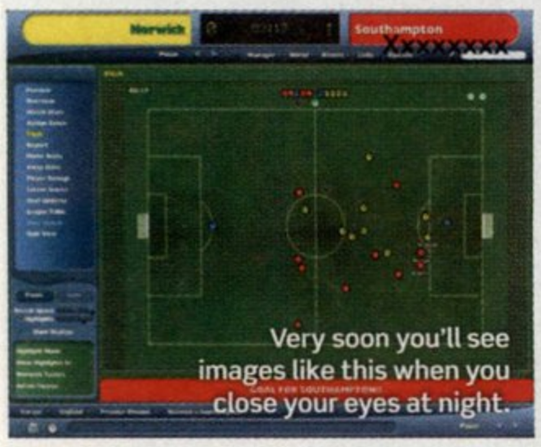
IT'S ›Boom! ›Economic ›More beautiful

IT'S NOT ›Clear ›Easy ›For quitters

Quantum

88%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** CCP ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **They say** 1.5GHz CPU, 3D card, 256Mb RAM ■ **We say** 2.5GHz CPU, DirextX 9 3D card, 512Mb RAM
■ **Multiplayer** Massively ■ **Link** www.eve-online.net ■ **Influenced by** Elite, Star Wars ■ **Alternatively** Nexus: The Jupiter Incident



PC GAMES GOLD GAME

FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005

You still get to be the championship manager

When Eidos parted ways with developer Sports Interactive and took the *Championship Manager* brand name with them, fans of the series were momentarily concerned that the series might finally be retired. However, Sports Interactive weren't going to give up that easily, and they speedily stitched together a deal with games giant Sega to publish the next game in their decade long series under the new name of *Football Manager 2005*. As was expected by fans, *Football Manager 2005* is very much the logical successor to *Championship Manager 03/04*, but the name change has given Sports Interactive an excuse to redesign and streamline the interface (something that was long overdue), as well as implement a number of entertaining new features. This corproate shift has resulted in a game that is quite easily one of the best in the series to date.

Because of the rabid fan-base this series has developed over the years, Sports Interactive are wise to listen to their community to see what the players want 'fixed' each year and as a result, the yearly update is usually always improved to the point where you can't help but want to buy it all over again. *Football Manager 2005* is no different. Huge strides have been made with this installment, rendering *CM 03/04* almost obsolete. The new interface is far more intuitive, with almost every menu in the game being linked in some fashion that you can forage into the frightening depths of the database and yet never lose your way home. Doing everything from picking the first team to setting up training schedules and mulling over the finances is now easier than ever, with simple and yet powerful additions – from more detailed 'right-click' menus, to a larger range of options within each screen, and the removal of load times between the tactics screen and the rest of your game. It feels that almost anything can be accessed, changed, tweaked and arranged in fewer steps than ever before. It's faster too.

Feels even less like 'Fantasy Football'

Whilst *Football Manager* would never stoop to entertain the player with novelty, Sports Interactive has slyly introduced more interaction with the media. You now role-play the gaffer more than ever before, rebuffing criticism from other managers in the press, dealing more intimately with individual players, and playing the media mind game as best you can to get the psychological edge over your opponent. You can even declare your interest in signing a player, even if you have no intention of doing so, in the hopes that it will unsettle them and cause problems in your opponents' squads.

SI has made *Football Manager 2005* feel even less like 'fantasy football', and more like a simulation of the real thing. If you're a football fanatic, you simply won't find another game on the market that will fulfill your dreams as this game can.

ELIOT FISH

PC GAMES ADDICT Still at the top of its game

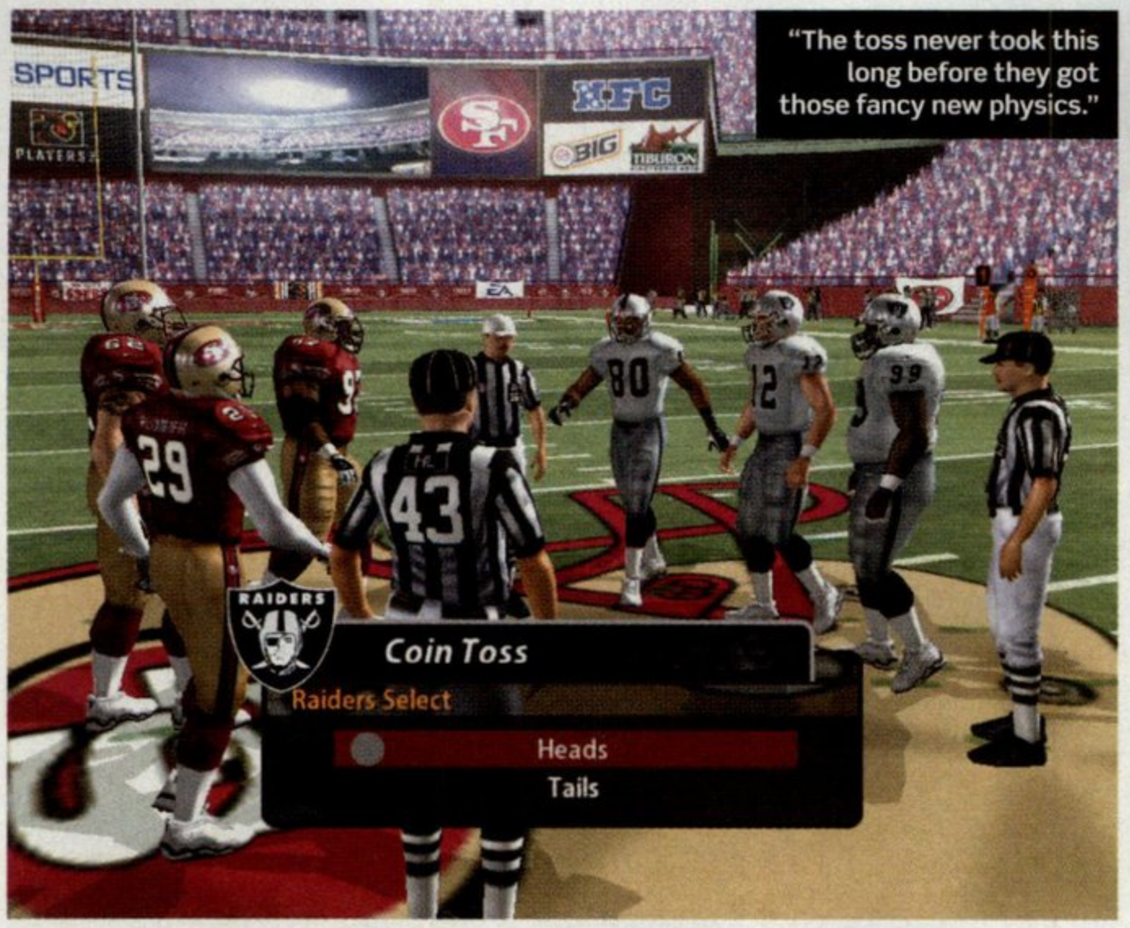
IT'S › Scarily addictive › Realistic › Accurate and detailed

IT'S NOT › Glitzy › Flawlessly presented › Conducive to a social life

Ballsy

90%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Sega ■ **Developer** Sports Interactive ■ **They say** PIII 600, 128MB RAM ■ **We say** PIV 2.0GHz, 512MB RAM
■ **Multiplayer** 1-16 over LAN or online ■ **Link** www.sigames.com ■ **Influenced by** The greatest game on earth ■ **Alternatively** Total Club Manager 2005



MADDEN NFL 2005

Is it that time of year again already?

John Madden is one of the all-time great sports commentators. While our football mike-eteers offer our AFL and NRL fans that particular breed of excitable, inarticulate play-yabbering, Madden's action-dissection always belonged to his own unique school of BS that's part psycho-analyst, part meterologist and part making-it-up as he goes along. The man's an institution, as is his game, which has been with us for over 15 years. And if any of the original programmers are still working on it, an institution is probably where they're headed next.

Madden 2005 is spot-on as per usual. As complete, comprehensive, anal and showy an American Football sim as the rest of the world will ever need. Unfortunately, the in-game engine suffers from a severe case of PS2-port syndrome and actually looks weaker than last year's version. Animations range from the bonecrushingly realistic to the downright choppy, while the crowd looks basic.

The default difficulty level is slightly north of 'tricky', but intuitive controls mean the action shifts at a breathless pace. This leads to some bruising, tight encounters, although it's a pity that passing is an infinitely preferable option to rushing when attempting to press forward. While 80% completion rates are a common occurrence at the end of a game, it's a struggle to gain significant yardage even with the paciest of running backs.

Create your own body-painted redneck

But what about the new features, eh? Well, get a load of the tweaked defensive playmaker controls and a 'Hit Stick' used to pummel opponents into submission. (A dual analog controller is required for these moves.)

Aside from that, it's business as usual. Months can be lost to the Franchise mode (it's like a mini *Football Manager 2005* with helmets) and it's fun to create your own body-painted redneck in the Create-A-Fan section. Still a great game then, but it's overkill if you have *Madden 2004*.

ROB TAYLOR

PC GAMES

Same old. Great old. The top NFL game, if you don't own it already.

80%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Electronic Arts ■ **Developer** In-house
■ **Multiplayer** 2-16, online ■ **Link** www.electronicarts.com ■ **Alternatively** Madden 2004

PRO EVO SOCCER 4

Unofficial, but still keepin' it real...

This is an inappropriately small review of a huge game, but before we get to the bit where I announce *Pro Evolution Soccer 4* is the best pure sports gaming experience you can buy, know it's neither perfect, nor for everyone.

Firstly, if you don't have a dual analogue controller, then you're not going to get the best out of what is an absolutely dreamy control system that allows for the player to get very specific touch on the ball. New skill moves almost feel like a tongue-in-cheek poke at the *FIFA* series, having moved away from it, arguably to mimic *Pro Evo's* more realistic play.

There's a lot of dummy names in use

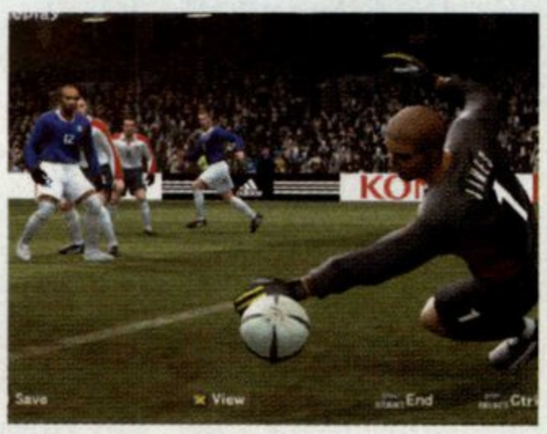
Secondly Konami have little to improve on the licensed material (or lack there of) from *PES3*, so there's a lot of dummy names in use, and none of the actual events football fans follow.

However, the Master League mode has not only had a host of small improvements throghout, it has also been opened up to allow the player to take over the team of their choice. The team rosters are actually quite accurate, and moving players around to match the real world is made easy via an edit mode.

There's still an element of vagueness to Konami's explanations of how free kicks work, and the new throw in system allows for more horrid accidents than ever before. What you see and experience on the pitch may be perfect, and the training modes and Master League are well executed, but the off-field presentation feels dated. Compared to *FIFA 2005*, it almost looks a little incomplete. The sad Japanese trend of using lurid menus, adding a loop of horrid glitzy synth music and making no effort to dress up the PC interface has not been messed with. *PES4* does itself no justice to newcomers used to better presentation.

Still, it looks and runs great on even the most mediocre systems, and if you want the best gameplay experience from a sports-sim, *Pro Evo Soccer 4* is it.

DAN TOOSE



PC GAMES

Still the best raw football-sim around, but it's now a line call.

91%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Konami ■ **Developer** In-house
■ **Multiplayer** 2, online ■ **Link** uk.gs.konami-europe.com ■ **Alternatively** FIFA Football 2005

THE FINEST GAMING FREEBIES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

CELEB

HI, I'M A GAME DEVELOPER

Name Ken Levine
Credits *Thief, System Shock 2, Freedom Force, Tribes: Vengeance*
My fave game: *Rome: Total War.* I love games that combine simulation and strategy... It's another game that gives you a giant toolbox.

My fave mod: *Thievery*, the *Unreal Tournament* mod. There were guys [on the *Thief team*] who had really strong ideas for multiplayer, and these came out in the mod.

The thing I'm most looking forward to: *Battle for Middle-Earth.* I hope it's – [We show him the PCG review.] Oh. That's a shame. Well I *was* looking forward to it. [Sorry, Ken.]

HALF-LIFE MOD

Zombie Panic

At last, a mod that lets you use your braaaaaains

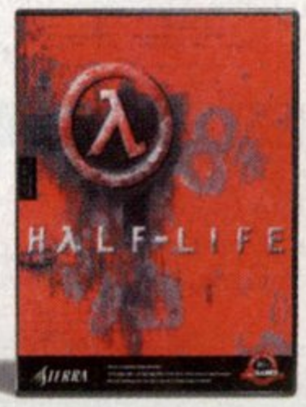
One undead guy, a group of survivors and a chronic lack of weaponry. And as bad as those odds are, they only get worse as survivors die and come back as zombies themselves. If you're not already excited by the thought of scrabbling for survival in a siege of flapping, flaky, festering cadavers, you might want to check your pulse. You're probably one of *them* already.

Zombie Panic is another great *Half-Life* multiplayer mod. Typical deathmatch is filtered through apocalyptic action. You're either a survivor left with a raggedy group of humanity, or you're a walking corpse, there to swipe your way through the server. As a survivor, you simply need to stay alive as long as you can. Every survivor that dies comes back as a zombie, and every zombie that dies resurrects.

DOWN LOADER
The recently deceased are returning to *Half-Life*

As the odds gradually stack in favour of the stiffs, other game mechanics come into play. Survivors can carry weaponry, but ammo is severely limited and the extra weight slows you down. Every bullet you expend brings you one step closer to your inevitable demise, so careful consideration of whether to shoot or run is needed. Which is near impossible when you're getting swiped at.

Adding to the tension are the dark, gloomy levels you find yourself in: an eerie mix of sniper spots and sneaky corridors. Death seems to pop up when you least expect it. When the final human is making his final stand, it's fun simply to stand back and watch as he struggles to fend off wave after wave of zombies. You sicko.



PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

27Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.zombiepanic.org
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	Half-Life, Steam
Raise the dead, then kill them. Dead easy	

LET US SPEND YOUR BANDWIDTH
Use the Download Manager to judge download speed, or find the best gaming picks of the month on the DVD.

BROADBAND BREEZE ‹ › BROADBAND BREAKER

10Mb	50Mb	150Mb	1Gb
56k friendly	*Modem mare*	*Modem meltdown*	*Nightie night*

MORROWIND MOD

Dulsya Isle

Idyllic island paradise, werewolves welcome

Bobba Fett makes one of his rare cameo appearances. No? OK, just some dude, then.

Morrowind's graphics are a little dated now, but this remains a very high class mod.

Morrowind's 3000+ mods often clash unpleasantly with the game's existing content, so it's refreshing to wash up on Dulsya Isle – a new island with characters and quests that feel genuinely in keeping.

The action focuses on two rival entrepreneurs hoping to develop their Dulsyan settlements into sprawling metropolises. It starts to get interesting when one of the fledgling towns actually gets bigger each time you visit, the expansions relating to the tasks you've carried out for the founder.

Just as impressive, though, is the polish and attention to detail applied to every aspect. There are also some fine scripted events, such as an army of skeletons descending on the town.

One warning, though: *Bloodmoon* players gripped by nightly lupine frenzies may find that on waking the next morning, naked and in the middle of nowhere, they've killed and eaten a plot-critical character or two.

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

2Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	http://dulsyaisle.nickj.net
Discs	On the CD
Requires	A full version of Morrowind
When Morrowind's world is not enough	

Unreal RTS

If you need more evidence that modders are a breed apart, this latest addition to the toppling tower of *UT2004* mods should seal it. Bizarrely, *Uskaarj* is an RTS project for Epic's first-person shooter engine, which sees the familiar *Unreal* enemies, the humans and Skaarj, do battle once more. Each faction begins with just one unit that must first be used to scour the map for unclaimed soldiers. These can ultimately be used to destroy the enemy HQ. The usual brand of RTS base-building with defence towers, research buildings and air and land units is sandwiched in between this cagey opening and the inevitable explosive climax. Grab the first beta at **www.uskaarj.beyondunreal.com.**

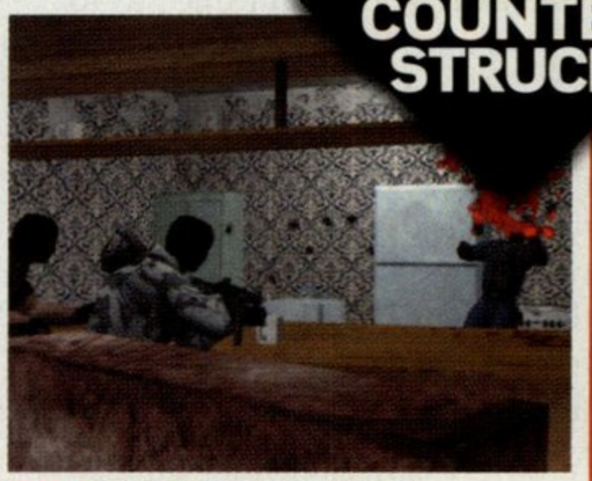
MACHINIMA

CLAN WARS

Why should I download it? Produced and co-directed by award winning machinima directory Daniel Frome, it's a satirical look at *Counter-Strike*, poking fun at campers, pro-gamers, noobs and even the game's creators.

DOWN LOADER

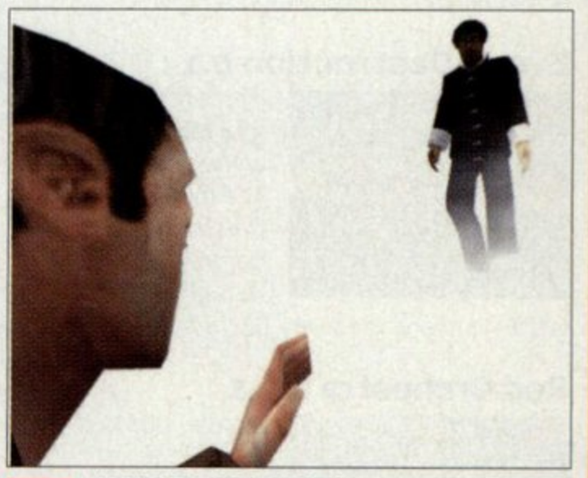
COUNTER STRUCK



1 GATE CRASHING
A group of noobs decide to invite a world famous clan to tea. Slaughter ensues.

2 GUNISHMENT
Hellbent on revenge in the next round, the noobs stockpile a huge arsenal.

3 CARNAGE
Both teams let rip with their entire back-catalogue of weaponry. Tanks! Missiles!



4 JUDGEMENT
With bodies strewn across the map, the 'gods' of *Counter-Strike* must intervene.

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

350Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.gwfilms.com/clanwars
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	Windows Media Player
Counter-Strike gets pwned	

FILE DUMP

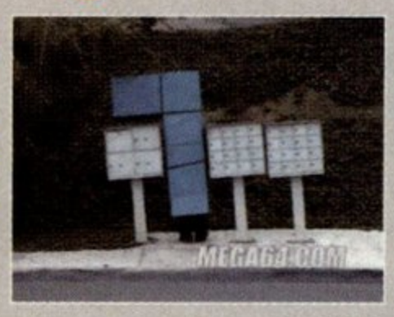
Light Bytes

Craig Pearson vinegars the online chip

head on the wall reminds you of a successful hunting trip you once had. Exits lead EAST. You can also see an old boot
COMMAND ■ wank
But I am too innocent for all of that.
COMMAND ■

SWEAR BEARS

Back when computers were made of rubber, and TVs doubled as monitors, adventure games used real words to move the game along. You typed the directions and the actions, and the game responded. Of course, just like when we got our first dictionaries and then the internet, most people went straight for typing-in profanity. Sometimes the game didn't recognise the words, but most were ready with a pithy response. This website chronicles the classic responses to profanity. **www.monkeon.co.uk/swearadventure**



REALITY GAMING

There's a man in a box trying to fit in square holes, like the gap between three blocks of mailboxes. There's another man walking around the streets asking if people "Know where I can find some sailors around here?" Mega64 take games to the streets in this series of silly, satirical videos. The realworld *Tetris* is genius, the *Shenmue* mickey-extraction wholly accurate. But the best skit is *Metal Gear Solid*. A man, a bandana and a supermarket. Watch as he tries to make his way through the fruit aisles unseen. Then get your mates and watch again. **www.mega64.com**

SPREADS WELL

Some people never look beyond Internet Explorer. Others use clunky old Netscape and kid themselves they're sticking it to The Man. Firefox is my browser of choice. It's the best customisable browser by a long shot. Join me and the rest of the rebels in spreading the word at Spread Firefox. This dedicated group of fans are doing all they can to convert the general populace to Mozilla's beauty. From Hyderabad (that's in India, apparently) to New Yawk (where they placed a full-page advert in the New York Times), **www.spreadfirefox.com** are fighting the good fight. Join us!

THE GG'S

If Ron Gilbert isn't your hero then you're a dirty stinking scumbag. (*Easy there, Craig, easy* – Ed) Ahem. He's the genius behind the glorious *Monkey Island* games and his blog is a must read. Grumpy Gamer is his soapbox, where he publishes his self-confessed "bitter ramblings about the Games Industry", tied together with some interesting commentary on the state of games and odd little flash cartoons. If you don't save this in your bookmarks – your Firefox bookmarks, needless to say – I shall grumble about you forever in my blog. **www.grumpygamer.com**

DOOM 3 MOD

Tin Man Squad 0.3

The Squad's the mod

There's only really one way to improve on the singular terror of *Doom 3*: make it a squad game. Tin Man Squad twists the psychotic demon squaddies that assault you all the way through the single-player campaign, and returns them as a squad that can be summoned to cover your behind. It's the gaming equivalent of the action injection Jim Cameron gave to Ridley's Alien.

The four classes: machinegunner, shotgunner, pistol and pistol with shield, are all culled from the enemies that you normally riddle in the dank corridors of the Martian base. Happily, they haven't taken it personally and prove a surprisingly adept combat unit. They cover you, move behind and take up strong positions in the middle of a firefight. In fact, they're a little too good. You need to set the difficulty up as high as it can go to keep the game challenging.

To complement the squaddies, the first few levels of the game have been (unofficially) re-released with a few tweaks to assist pathfinding. You can find the new levels at the download site listed below.

This is very a much a work in progress mod: the NPCs are spawned with console commands and they have a tendency to get stuck, but it's a promising start nonetheless.

In the future, twist off medicine tops will have a few additional surprises.

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

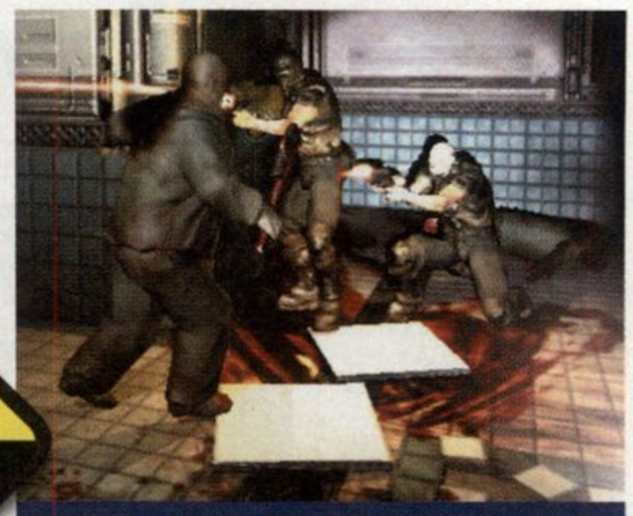
22Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.gameplanet.co.nz
Discs	N/A
Requires	Patched *Doom 3*

Rough and barely ready squad action

DOWN LOADER SQUAD MOD



The Friday toilet cleaner finally snaps after one paper cloggage too many.

Watching the squad work through the demons is lots of fun.

UPDATE

ESSENTIAL MODS

The Specialists 2.1

Half-Life
43Mb Patch, 140Mb
www.specialistsmod.net
The latest version of the John Woo-inspired mod kick-starts the bullet party all over again with new and improved thrown weapon physics.

Eve of Destruction 0.1

Battlefield Vietnam
374 Mb
www.eodmod.com
The mod that did *Battlefield Vietnam* before *DICE* even thought about it. This is the first version for, err, *Battlefield Vietnam.*

Red Orchestra v.3.1

Unreal Tournament 2004
378 Mb (Patch), 618Mb (Full)
http://redorchestramod.gameservers.
This update for the WW2 mod has more detailed vehicle changes and five new maps.

Calling all mods, indy games, machinima, shareware... Send your links to:

dan@derwenthoward.com.au

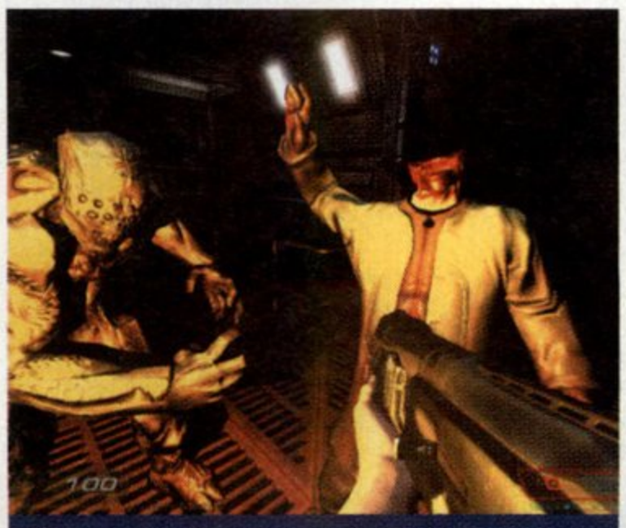
DOOM 3 MOD

Sigma Core

Secret is never a good idea

There's a big problem with working in a top secret hidden base – nobody knows you're there. Who do you turn to when things go wrong? It's not as if you can call the emergency services. Hell, half the time you *are* the emergency services.

Deep in the heart of Sigma Core, a patient is recovering from a trauma.



"Excuse me. I don't want to alarm anyone, but I appear to have lost the top of my head."

His tales of visions, monsters and computer failures aren't the half of it. This single-player mod has a classic slow build: no weapons and no enemies, just an empty level full of eerie noises and shadows. Once you get weapons, the shinola polishes the fan and all hell literally breaks loose.

This is unrepentant *Doom 3*, funnelling you through a story so tightly controlled and scripted that you always know *something* is up ahead. You just don't know where from and when; monsters teleport in front, behind and above you. Classic id, even if they didn't make it.

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

28Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.planetquake.com/quakerx
Discs	N/A
Requires	A patched *Doom 3*

It's as polished as Carmack's Ferarri

Going Defcon

Defcon is a *Command & Conquer Generals* mod set in the year 2196 with two factions fighting over resources. The Republic of Ebres, a new military force with hi-tech tanks, rumbled into the Comson Strip – a previously neutral zone claiming the resources as their own. Leaving Aerosia, the established Superpower with an all-conquering air force, little option but to go to Defcon 1. An almighty *C&C* style struggle ensues with a bundle of new units, complete with new damage model and rates of fire. This first release is playable in both single- and multi-player. Grab it at http://defcon.game-mod.net

BATTLEFIELD: VIETNAM MOD

Dice City

An episode of wrecks in the city

This is what happens when you insist on buying a bike before checking it out first.

A skyline? In *Battlefield: Vietnam*? The mod team have worked wonders with the engine.

Set in a city, in this total conversion of *Battlefield: Vietnam*, you can either be part a SWAT team sent to deal with the drug barons, or defend your turf from the do-gooders with Molotov cocktail-chucking gangbangers.

The *Battlefield: Vietnam* engine survives the transition from the jungles to the city very well: multi-storey carparks, bridges, aircraft hangers and shops all mingle with the buildings. There's a plethora of new transport as well, with the city littered with police cars, trucks, sports cars, motorbikes and police choppers. The setting totally changes the usual strategies, from run and gun in open areas to tight, claustrophobic street fighting.

Exploiting the new city landscape is half the fun. High carparks are the perfect vantage point for a sniper, crossroads provide excellent choke points for ambushes, and funnel the action in a way that no open-jungle map ever manages. Good, solid stuff.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

200Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	http://polygoostudios.com/dicecity
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	*Battlefield Vietnam*, patched to 1.2

A very different *BF:V* mod, as solid as concrete

FREEWARE

Gate 88

All your gates belong to us

DOWN LOADER HATEY HATE

Gate 88 is to Asteroids what the Taj Mahal is to Lego. It's a top-down shooter with remarkable depth, but it's not just about the shooting: there's territory to grab, factories to deploy, fleets to build. And people to kill, because, brilliantly, this is a multiplayer game. No stale bots to blaze away at as you carry on with territorial thieving.

Some blobs in space. There's a real, tactical game in there. Promise!

You start out with just a base and a ship. The ship doubles as a power plant, so you need to build the factories from scratch in its sphere of influence. Choosing what to make and where to place it is hugely important for your mission, particularly when push comes to shove and the battles commence.

Fighting is simple, frantic, and with deployable fleets of fighters at your disposal it's as twitchy as hell. There's a real skill in balancing the raucous action and tending to your base. Particularly when there's more than one fleet on your case.

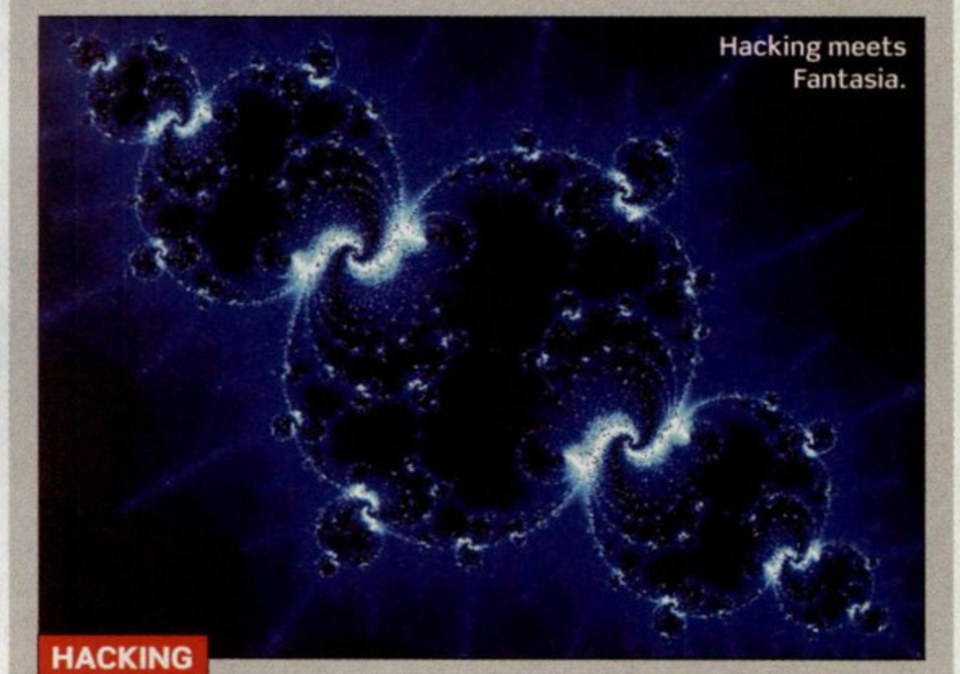
PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

12Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	http://queasygames.com/gate88
Discs	N/A
Requires	Internet connection

***Asteroids* transformed into an RTS. Still frantic**



Hacking meets Fantasia.

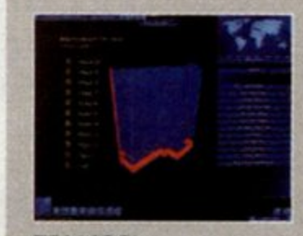
HACKING

Uplink Mods

All ports are open...

Uplink is one of those games that everyone loves and hardly anyone has played. The fans of this hacking sim love it to bits – while everyone else loves it by proxy. A little TCP/IP humour for you there.

The tense future tale of a hacker working his way through missions (the game uses a bulletin board system) was a real breath of fresh air, and it garnered a group of fanatical followers fanning the flames of fandom. Developers Introversion rewarded the obsession and furnished the fans with a dev kit, and the time spent hacking their favourite game into something else has been well spent. From total conversions to new systems, to the sort of tweaks that only fans can beg, we've burned our way through the top five, but a lot more can be had at **www.modlink.net**.

THE MOD	WHAT IS IT?
 FBI MOD	The best of the fan's hack jobs, it adds the FBI's computer systems to the game. There are security systems to unlock, prisoners to release and new tools to use. Plus a database of new people, with details of their crimes. Will you give them their freedom?
UPLINK: THE MOD	Perhaps the weakest name for a mod ever, but it cleans up the shaky original game and twists the visuals into a black and green monchrome computer style. Other additions include new voices and photos, plus a selection of in-game gateways to explore.
CM DATABASE	This was removed from the full version of the game, but clever modders with the Dev Kit and extra large magnifying glasses managed to find it and slot it in. The Central Medical Database gives you another system to hack into and more files to copy, rewrite or delete.
SIMPLY UPLINK	Another mod that does the job of a patch. This one smoothes out all the kinks: the file copier stays open after use and critical missions are highlighted on the map. These tweaks make the hacking the focus of the game, so there's nothing else to worry about.
UPLINK CONSOLE	*Uplink* proves graphics aren't everything, and this mod takes that ethos to a new level. This themed skin alters the facade making the game look like a command console, so you can pretend you're really hacking 'back in the day'. It's very striking visually – one for true hackers.

HALF-LIFE 2

Half-Life 2: Off Limits

The Beast must die

You can't help but feel sorry for the alien beastie in *Off Limits*. Yes, it's a feisty little creature that will happily rip the vitals out of any human in its path but, as it scuttles through the post-apocalyptic maps of this forthcoming *Half-Life 2* mod, it's being hunted. Stalked by two teams of desperate humans, their only ambition is to end the lonely existence of this AI-controlled invader.

There's just one tiny problem. Only one player, 'the Hunter', has the power to kill the alien – and only a single weapon, the railgun, is able to inflict the necessary damage. The railgun begins the round in the possession of the Vanguard faction, but their opponents, the Rogues, have the technology to locate and track the beast with radar. So begins a deadly game of cat, mouse and alien, as the Rogues seek to protect the alien while hatching a plan to snatch the railgun. "They can try to delude the Vanguard or they can mount a surprise attack," project lead Maarten De Meyer explained to us. "If they are good enough, they can even lure the alien away from the Vanguard, or lead it to an easily defendable place."

A deadly game of cat, mouse and alien

But the fact is, De Meyer can only speculate on the player tactics likely to be employed, with pipe bombs, tripwires and even deployable cameras all available to either team. The cameras will allow the blinded Vanguard to monitor areas for the movement of the alien, and if their sniper can get a clear shot he'll be able to tag the creature to allow his team mates to track its movement. Vehicles will also be included, but with care. The team are wary of disrupting the balance, but forklifts and APCs are likely to be included for use by experienced players to aid secondary objectives and unlock new vantage points on the map.

MOD NEWS

***HL2* engine to play hide and seek. With aliens**

ON THE DISC Full interviews with the mod teams from *Off Limits* and *Nexuiz* > Resources, more screenshots > Galleries

Slaying the alien is the only victory condition. And the hunter is likely to only get one shot: miss with the all-important headshot and the spindly, pointy-headed alien suddenly transforms into a rampaging beast that will tear through any flesh in its vicinity.

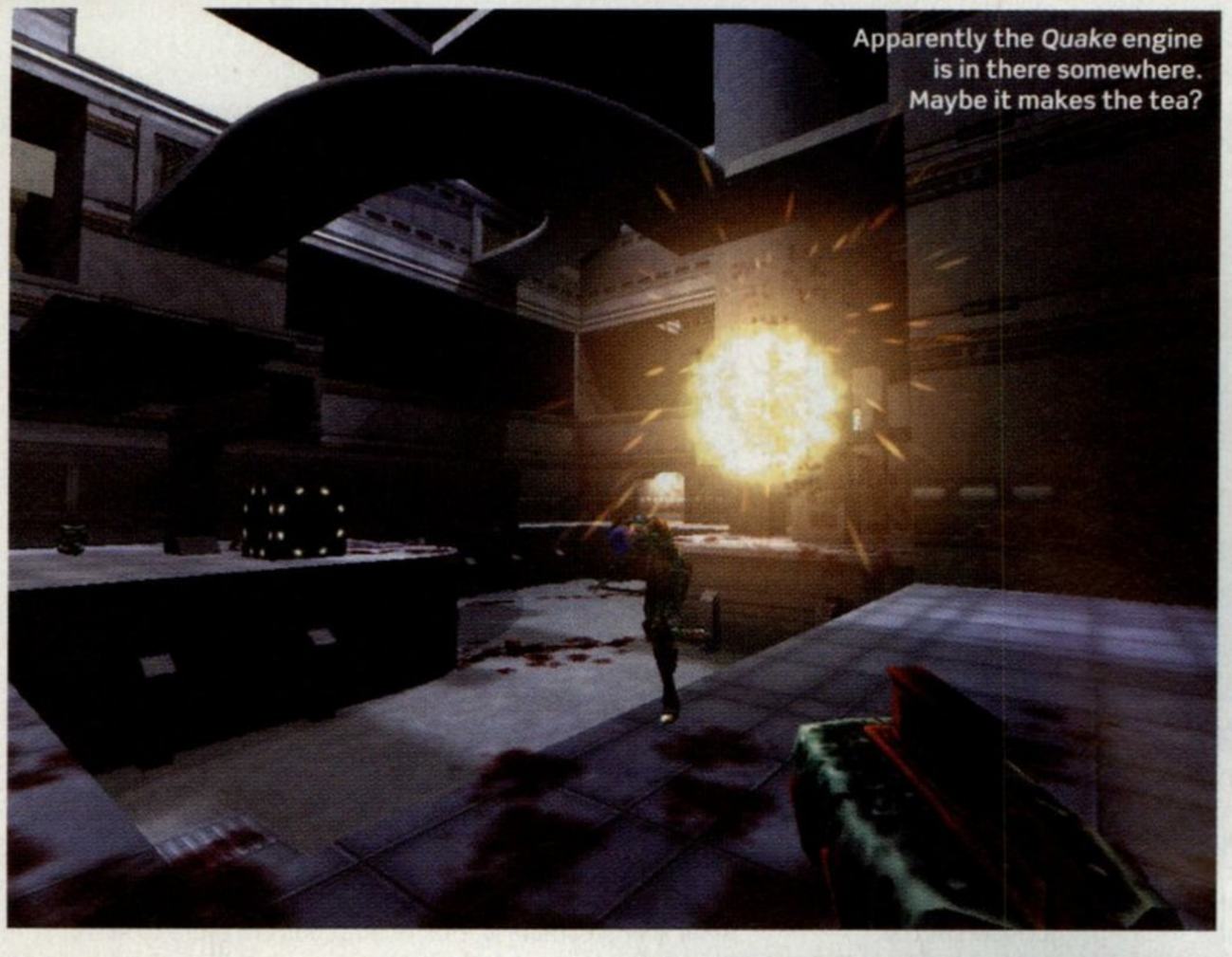
While the two factions can let rip into one another using an array of modern-day ranged and melee weaponry, players simply respawn, *Battlefield 1942* style, and rejoin the struggle. Only when the creature finally falls can either team claim victory.

PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Multiplayer
Link www.off-limits.be
Percentage complete 20%

A vivid glimpse of the game the *Off Limits* team plan to make.



Apparently the *Quake* engine is in there somewhere. Maybe it makes the tea?

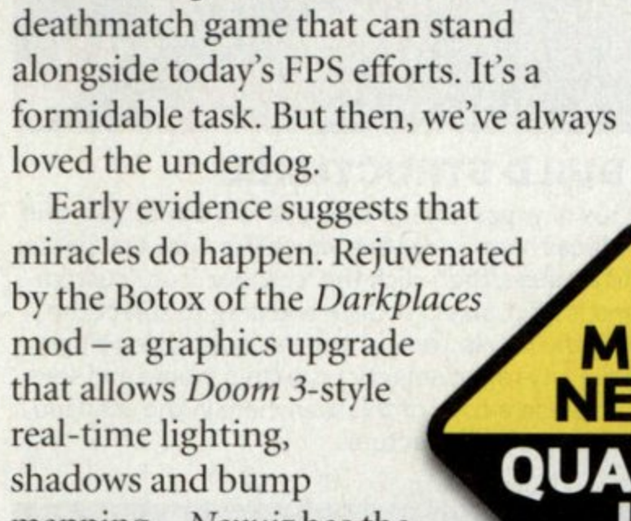
QUAKE

Nexuiz

Better than *Lastuiz*

Nexuiz is attempting the modding equivalent of making a silk purse from the proverbial porcine ear. It seeks to transform the ancient, original *Quake* into a deathmatch game that can stand alongside today's FPS efforts. It's a formidable task. But then, we've always loved the underdog.

Early evidence suggests that miracles do happen. Rejuvenated by the Botox of the *Darkplaces* mod – a graphics upgrade that allows *Doom 3*-style real-time lighting, shadows and bump mapping – *Nexuiz* has the looks of a game half its age. Its lightning-fast framerates will also come in handy for an arena-based mod that baulks the trend towards realism and targets the guttural thrills of sci-fi deathmatch – just as the original *Quake* did so long ago.



You'll put in all the drab grainy brown textures later, right guys?

Nexuiz looks well on the way to achieving the realistic lighting of modern FPS games.

MOD NEWS
QUAKING IT

Players start a map and select their method of murder from nine available weapons, all of which, project lead Lee Vermeulen assured us, "are able to kill an enemy in under three seconds."

The most devastating is the rocket launcher, which has a detonation mode that enables players to launch their projectiles and explode them with perfect timing as they home in on their target.

Power-ups, littered throughout the custom maps, provide the necessary boosts to speed and armour. "We're also planning a power-up that the player must earn," says Vermeulen. "If the they get enough kills in a short period of time they go into berserk mode. They'll instantly get the instagib gun and be able to massacre enemies."

Playable online or with bots, this standalone mod has taken over two years to make but is at last within our sights, with a release date penciled-in for early 2005.

PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Singleplayer
Link www.nexuiz.com
Percentage complete 90%

More than just a cheap Japanese knock-off.

ROME: TOTAL WAR

Sengoku Jidai

Turning Japanese

While Creative Assembly leaf through the history books for their next *Total War* release, the fans are only too happy to recreate former glories. *Sengoku Jidai* warps us back to feudal Japan to tread those familiar *Shogun: Total War* battlefields, but using the imperial power of *Rome*.

The mod will consist of two campaigns from the Sengoku period, a time when warlords, or Daimyo, battled for supremacy with giant armies of samurai in a country splintered into warring provinces.

A simplified tech tree will hand us vast armies from the start, with Samurai trampling over rice fields, raiding Buddhist temples and laying siege to castles in the glorious 3D of the *Rome: Total War* engine.

PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Singleplayer
Link http://forums.totalwar.org
Percentage complete 10%

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

MOD ROUND-UP

A Star Wars total conversion is always the first mod idea anyone comes up with for a new game. Some imagination, therefore, is required to come up with *Battlefront* projects. *Expanded Universe* warps us to the New Jedi Order time period covered in a series of popular novels. The Rebellion and Empire join forces against a new foe, the Yuuzhan Vong, with fresh weapons, ships and map locales planned. It's early days, but you can visit their forum at **www.poinda.maxmax6.com/Expanded_Universe** for the gist, or to volunteer your modding services.

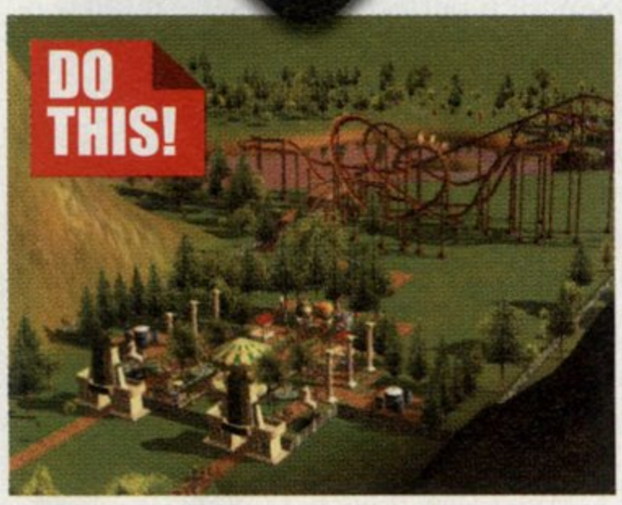
A lack of official tools is holding things back, but there are a host of mini mods available already. KingGuru's *HothMod* has warmed a few cockles, removing the boundaries on the official map so that pilots can fly without limits. Check out **http://starwarsbattlefront.filefront.com** for the latest.

MOD-MAKING AND LEVEL DESIGN MADE EASY

How to build a scenario in Roller Coaster Tycoon 3

BY JAMES TAYLOR
(Level Designer, Frontier Developments)

D-I-Y
Create your own theme park in an afternoon



WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

Skill Easy
Time 4 hours

WHAT WILL I NEED?

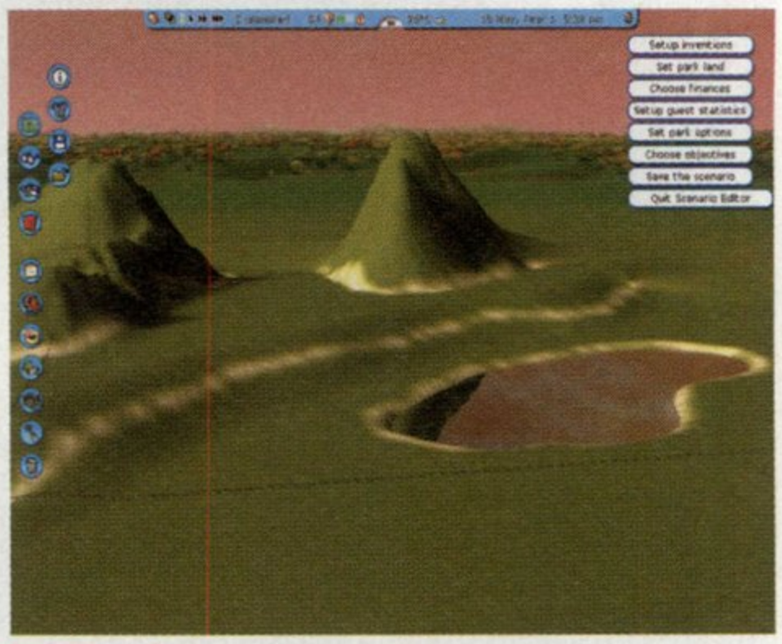
- The *RCT3* editor
  Comes with your copy of the game
- The finished map to consult so you can follow along. Find it at:
  www.derwenthoward.com.au/subs/pcga

PCGAMES RESOURCE HARVESTER

- **The official site**
  www.atari.com/rollercoastertycoon
- **Community fansite**
  http://rct2.thrillnetwork.net
- **For a little inspiration**
  www.rcdb.com
- **Submit your finished scenarios here**
  www.rctcompetition.com

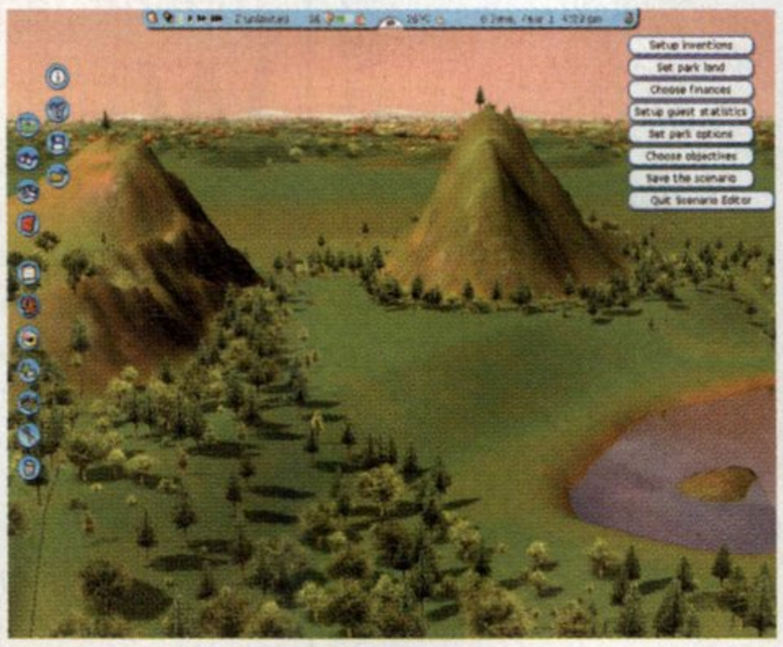
01 SETTING THE BASICS

The scenario editor has two main menus, the left one is the standard game UI (which will contain additional scenario development options), and the top right one is scenario editor specific. Firstly, set the map size: click 'Set park land', then on the last tab on the following window use the icons to set the map size to 90x90. Now set the background to 'mountain' by clicking the tab second from the right, and select 'mountain' from the drop-down list.



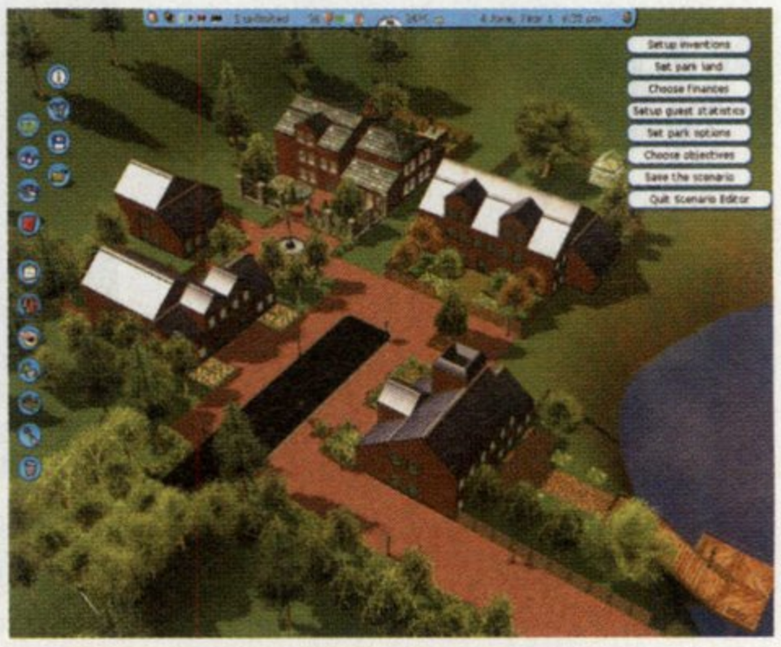
02 PAINTING AND TERRAFORMING

Use the blank landscape as a canvas, using the ground texture tool to draw an outline. Any texture will suffice. Doing this will help you get proportions right, and will aid you in making the scenario more aesthetically pleasing. After this is complete, the foundations are there to start terraforming (employ the 'flatten for rides' tool where appropriate). Use the tools in the built-in tutorial to do this.



03 TEXTURE AND FOLIAGE

It's time to paint the various areas. Use the texture tools, with a big brush to start with on the generic areas, then use progressively smaller brushes to enhance and touch-in the appearance of rocks, grass etc. If seeing the sides of mountains becomes difficult due to shadows, un-pause and re-pause the game at different times of day. When you're happy, add some (generic only) trees, shrubs and rocks, placing the larger ones first.

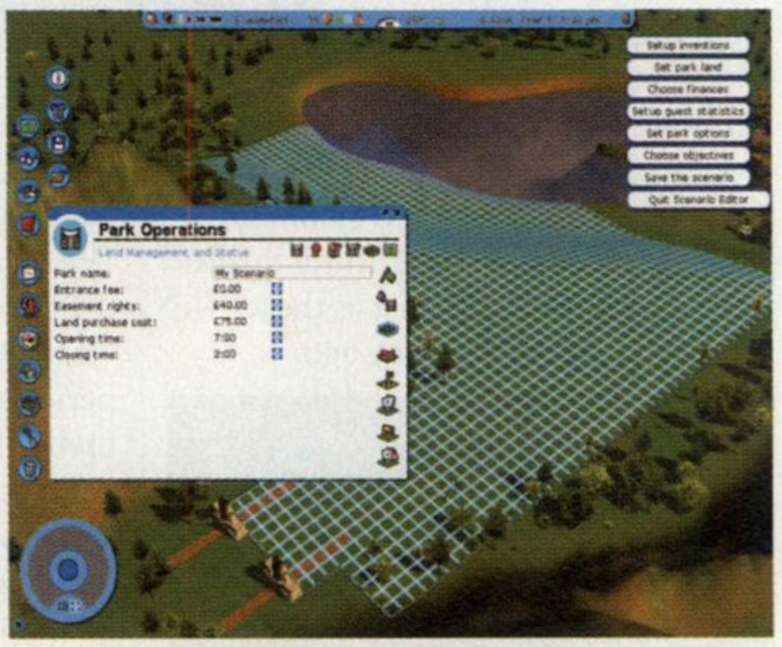


04 BUILD STRUCTURES

It's now possible to save custom structures, and place them elsewhere, much like copy and paste. To do so, build a house, then click the 'scenery' icon, 'custom structures' and 'select objects'. Click and drag to select the area containing the house you want to save out, using single clicks to remove any rogue selection squares. Name and save it. Now you can place a copy of this anywhere in the scenario, by clicking 'place custom structure'.

05 INSERT PARK BASICS

For a park to function, peeps must be able to get into the park. Select the spot for your park entrances and place them. They are found under 'scenery', 'park entrances'. After these have been placed, place a path going from the entrances, to the point the peeps are going to appear in the scenario from. After this has been reached, place a 'park guest injection point', accessed from the same menu that contains the park entrances.



06 SET PLAYABLE LAND

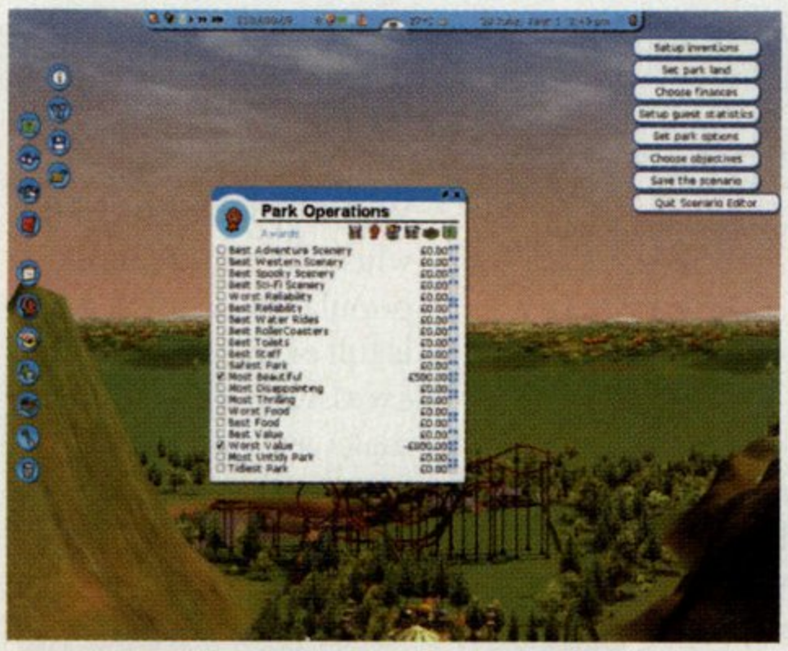
Click 'set park land' in the top right, and use the icons to define purchased land, easement rights for sale (land which can only have tracks and high paths), leased for easement, non attainable, and land which is unlocked after an objective is complete. The path from the injection point to the entrance should never be owned. Set the clear land in the middle to owned, including some of the lake, and everywhere else to 'not owned, and can never be'.

07 PLACE A STARTER PARK

Build a couple of attractions near the entrance to the scenario, especially a toilet, one small ride, a food stand, drink stand, a few path lights and some benches. This will provide the basics for keeping the visiting peeps happy (unhappy peeps won't feel like riding the rides, similarly a hungry peep would rather find something to eat than ride a ride). Open everything, add one mechanic, one janitor and one entertainer, and add some scenery for aesthetic value.

09 ITEMS AND RESEARCH

As this is a 'generic' scenario, you need to remove the players' ability to select other themed rides. Click 'Setup Inventions' and remove Generic from the filter criteria (blue top hat). Move everything that's left to the left column. Filter only Generic items (using the tabs) and distribute them between 'Items to invent during game' and 'Items available at start of game' columns, ensuring items you've already placed remain in the right hand column.

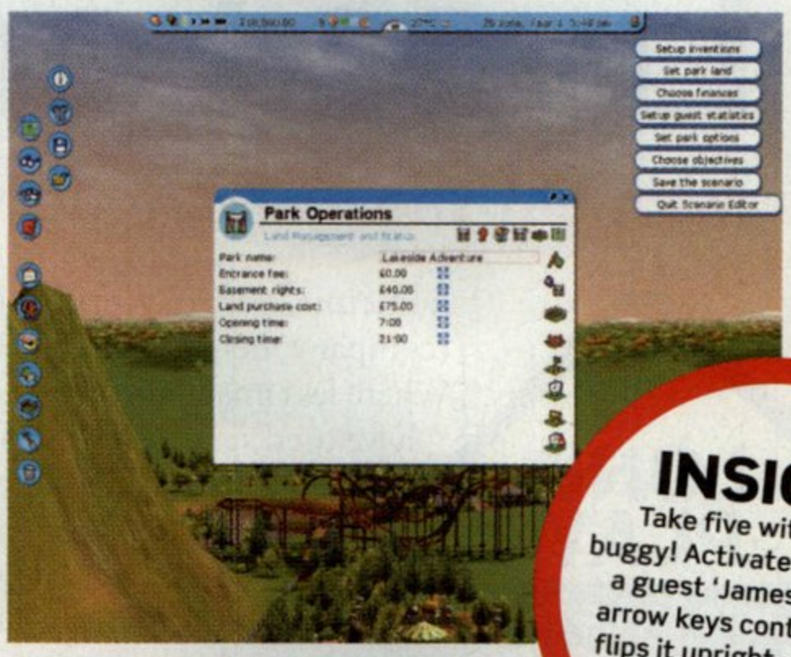


11 GUESTS AND PARK OPTIONS

Click 'Setup guest statistics', and decrease their average cash to 40. Click 'Set park options', and tick 'Forbid marketing materials'. Change the park boundary fence by clicking the second from right icon in the window, then the fence icon, and choose 'interleaved block'. Types of rewards need to be set, along with the value of each, by clicking on the rosette icon. Enable only the 'Most Beautiful' reward, and the 'Worst Value' fine, set at 500 and -800.

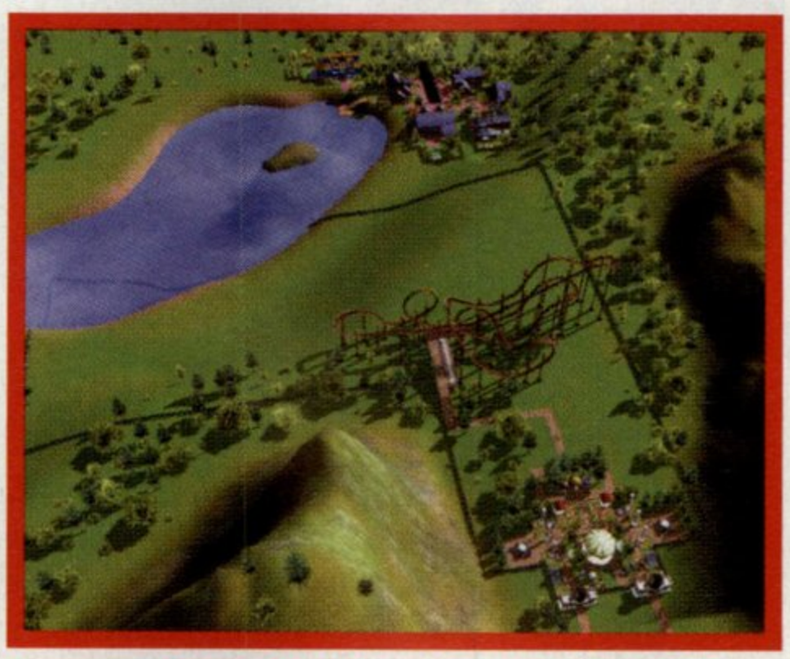
08 COASTER CONSTRUCTION

To give the scenario a starting block, add a coaster. Like a good film, a coaster should have an enticing beginning and interesting mid-section, building up to a grand finale. Some weapons at your disposal are gut-wrenching inversions, air-time, and adding scenery to the route the track takes. High speed turns should be banked, otherwise excessive lateral G-forces will be experienced by the riders, which will reduce the rides' rating.



10 FINANCES AND PARK SETTINGS

From the 'Choose Finances' menu, un-tick 'Unlimited Money', set the 'Cash' value to 10,000, and set a starting loan of 5,000 at an interest rate of 5.9%. Click 'Set park land', name the park 'Lakeside Adventure', and adjust the opening and closing times to 7:00 and 21:00. Sunrise is at 8:00, sunset is at 20:00. Make sure the park, attractions and rides are open.



12 SET OBJECTIVES AND SAVE

Click 'Choose objectives'. Scenarios have three levels of difficulty, each of which can have unique objectives. The hat tabs at the top of the window access these levels. From the 'add objective' drop down menu, choose Minimum Park Value for all three levels, and set this at 40,000, 60,000 and 8,000, respective to the level of difficulty. For Entrepreneur, set a small cash bonus for its completion. Now save the scenario and voila! A fully playable scenario.

INSIGHT

Take five with the *RCT* buggy! Activate by re-naming a guest 'James Hunt'. The arrow keys control it, space flips it upright, and clicking it activates buggy cam. The Delete tool removes it.

Design Law Debunked

Not a rule "It's got to be winnable"

Dave Morris is lead designer at Elixir

The other day I heard that Microsoft are clamping down on games where you make a mistake and get Game Over. Quite right too. Regular readers will know what we think in these parts about that kind of thing.

There was once a boardgame of the Cuban revolution. One of those serious simulation-type games in Strategy & Tactics magazine. The sort that comes with a 30-page closely typed rulebook. The revolutionary player got to pick locations where he could set off bombs, assassinate officials, deliver stirring Marxist speeches and so on. The government player – with no idea of what would happen next, or where – had few options. He could ignore the revolutionaries and slowly see public approval shift towards them. Or he could stick troops on every street corner, possibly catching a terrorist in the act now and then, but certainly polarizing opinion against himself in the process. The upshot is that the government player just couldn't win.

Now, this isn't the same thing as penalising the player with Game Over when he or she messes up. I'm talking about a game that you play right through to the end, and that provides lots of interesting choices along the way, but in which all the final outcomes are different kinds of failure.

What is interesting in such a game is why and how you fail. It may not appeal to the keenly sought-after mass market, but then unhappy endings don't appeal to most moviegoers either. Yet they can be made to work spectacularly well – and be commercially successful.

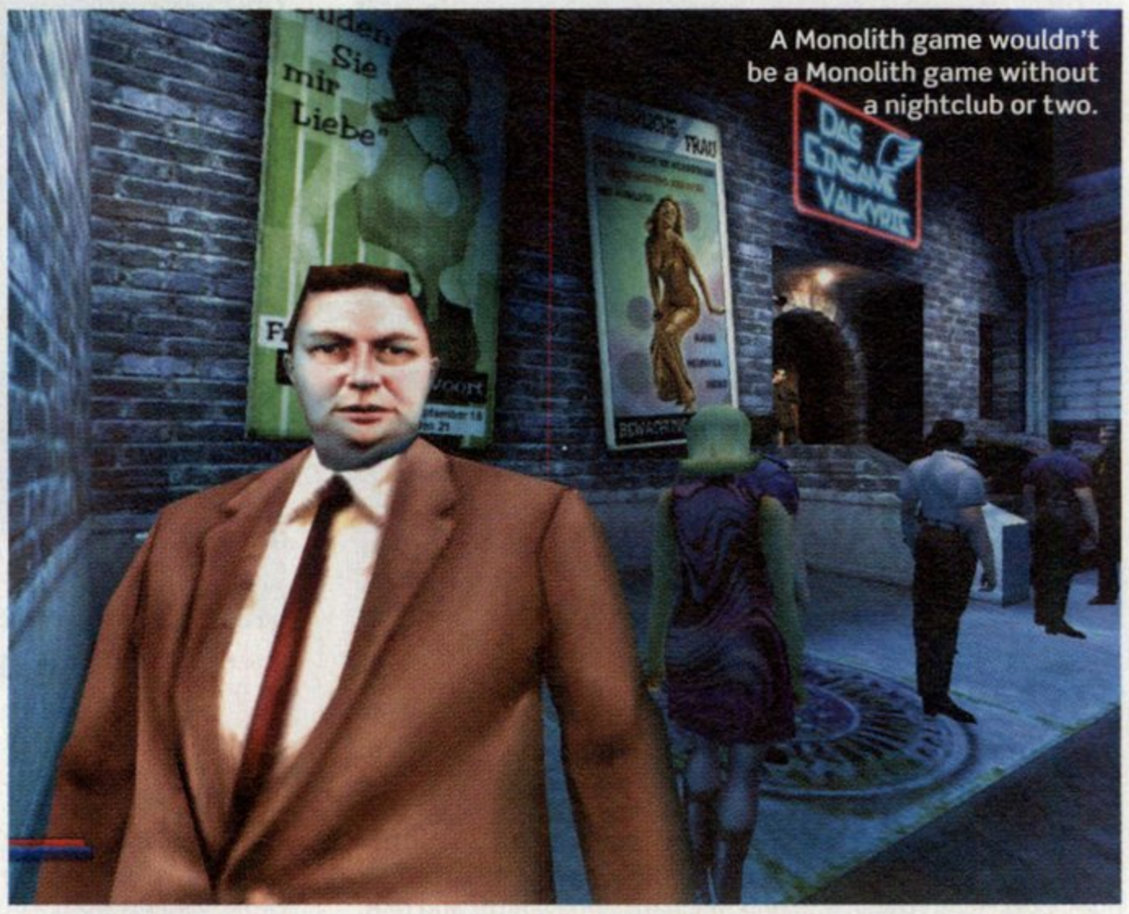
Playing unwinnable games can grant insights that you can't get from reading history books. The Cuban game showed that once you have the populace strongly against you, armed with modern guns and bombs, you're screwed. It's a valuable lesson. Knowing that, we wouldn't nowadays end up invading another country and trying to police it with tank patrols, would we?

■ **This design column regularly appears in game development trade journal Develop.**

Want to write a mod tutorial for PC GAMES ADDICT? Then contact:

dan@derwenthoward.com.au

When not chatting about their mothers-in-law, the goons are usually dispensing lead.



A Monolith game wouldn't be a Monolith game without a nightclub or two.

No One Lives Forever

Thinker, joker, soldier, spy... meet the marvellous Ms Archer

Seconds after I agreed to replay *No One Lives Forever* for this article, I was wracked with doubts. Would it be as rib-tickling as I remembered it or as wonderfully diverse? Would it still seem as imaginative? Having taken the plunge and spent the past week squeezed into the skin-tight plastic catsuit of superfly '60s superspy Cate Archer I can report with a happy heart (and sweaty crevices) that *NOLF* is every bit the amusing, inventive, life-affirming experience I remembered.

First-person shooters and humour have traditionally slept in separate beds. Here's irrefutable proof that it doesn't have to be this way; an extremely accomplished, stealth-oriented shooter seasoned with plenty of laughter. Much of the comedy comes in the form of overheard conversations between HARM (an evil criminal organisation) employees. You find yourself listening-in as bored gun-toting goons gas about work, families, and hobbies. Such chats amuse, but also immerse.

Another source of chuckles are the numerous readable 'intelligence items' (company memos, personal letters). Where less imaginative devs might have used such items solely to communicate clues or bolster scores, clever Monolith use them to perpetuate wry running jokes and show us the laughably bureaucratic internal workings of the world's premier maleficent multinational.

As relentlessly comedic as *NOLF* is, if FPS fundamentals had been neglected there'd be no recommendation here. Thankfully the shooting irons are solid, HARM's hoodlums quick on their feet, (watch as foes duck behind parapets, roll out of trouble and flip tables for cover!) and the level design superb.

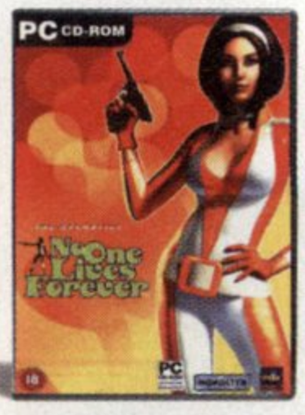
One of the few disappointments in *Evil Genius* was the lack of choice when it came to lair locations. *NOLF* captures the globetrotting flavour of the Bond movies far better, whisking Cate through a succession of exotic locales. Name another title in which – in the space of a couple of days play – you can find yourself bobbing in a vat of German beer, plunging from a disintegrating airliner without a parachute, jumping crevasses in a snowmobile, and spearing sharks in the brine-filled belly of a sunken freighter.

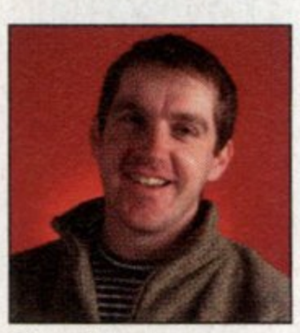
Perfect game then? Well, of course not, but when the world's most popular PC gaming genre is full of macho wankers, excessive gore and other male-centric content, Cate Archer's jokes and jump-suits were always going to turn heads.

LONG PLAY

No game lives forever, but some still have the power to charm

After an eventful dive, Cate hasn't even got the energy for a bit of "Is that a snorkel in your pocket..." banter with the Captain.





Played by
Tim Stone
Played For
Kicks and giggles

Want to see a classic game revisited in PC GAMES ADDICT? Send your links to:
dan@derwenthoward.com.au

Bobbing in a vat of German beer

PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

First review N/A
Why now? *Evil Genius* has put us in the mood
The funniest FPS ever made and one of the most varied. Put yourself in HARM's way today.

■ **Publisher** Empire (originally Fox Interactive) ■ **Developer** Monolith ■ **Requires** 300MHz CPU, 64Mb RAM, 8Mb 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** 2-16 players, online ■ **Link** www.noonelivesforever.com
■ **Community** www.nolfgirl.com ■ **Influenced by** Thief, Half-Life ■ **Spiritual successor** NOLF2 ■ **Get it from** Any good shelf of budget games

Available monthly in all newsagents

→62 MASSIVE PAGES OF TUTORIALS FOR XP, OFFICE AND MORE!

100% JARGON FREE

Microsoft® Windows® xp

AUSTRALIA'S OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Win 50 copies of Norton AntiVirus

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Back up today!

Protect your documents, photos, music and memories

Plus: free bonus backup software on CD

50 quick and easy XP tips

Expert shortcuts that get results fast!

Join the blogging bonanza

How to set up your own online journal

GET MORE FROM YOUR PC

- Take better shots with your digital camera p88
- How to land the best broadband deal p94
- Boost your computer with a BIOS update p44
- CD burning secrets p96
- Style up your desktop p54

PLUS: FIREWALLS REVIEWED & RATED

Australia's biggest and best discs!

DVD &CD

DVD ROM | COMPACT disc DIGITAL DATA

TWO DISCS INSIDE »

OVER $225 OF FREE SOFTWARE!

Microsoft® Windows® xp

AUSTRALIA'S OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE

ON THIS MONTH'S DISCS: 12 FULL PROGRAMS!

WORTH $199

PC Backup Kit
Protect your documents, email, photos, music files and more!

WORTH $25

AbuseShield
Stop spyware, Trojans, worms and other unwelcome intruders

The Incredibles
You've seen the movie, now play the game and save the world!

Some programs require online registration

Microsoft Digital Image Pro 10

EXCLUSIVE! Edit, enhance and organise your digital photos

60 DAY TRIAL plus $50 CASH BACK

Plus: pump up the volume with the latest version of Windows Media Player 10, improve your display with Microsoft's ClearType tuning tool, style your desktop with YzShadow, customise your PC with TweakUI, and the latest PC games!

...ontents and software tutorials, see page 107

MARCH 2005 $14.95
NZ $16.95 INC GST
PRINT POST APPROVED 255003/07037

DERWENT HOWARD

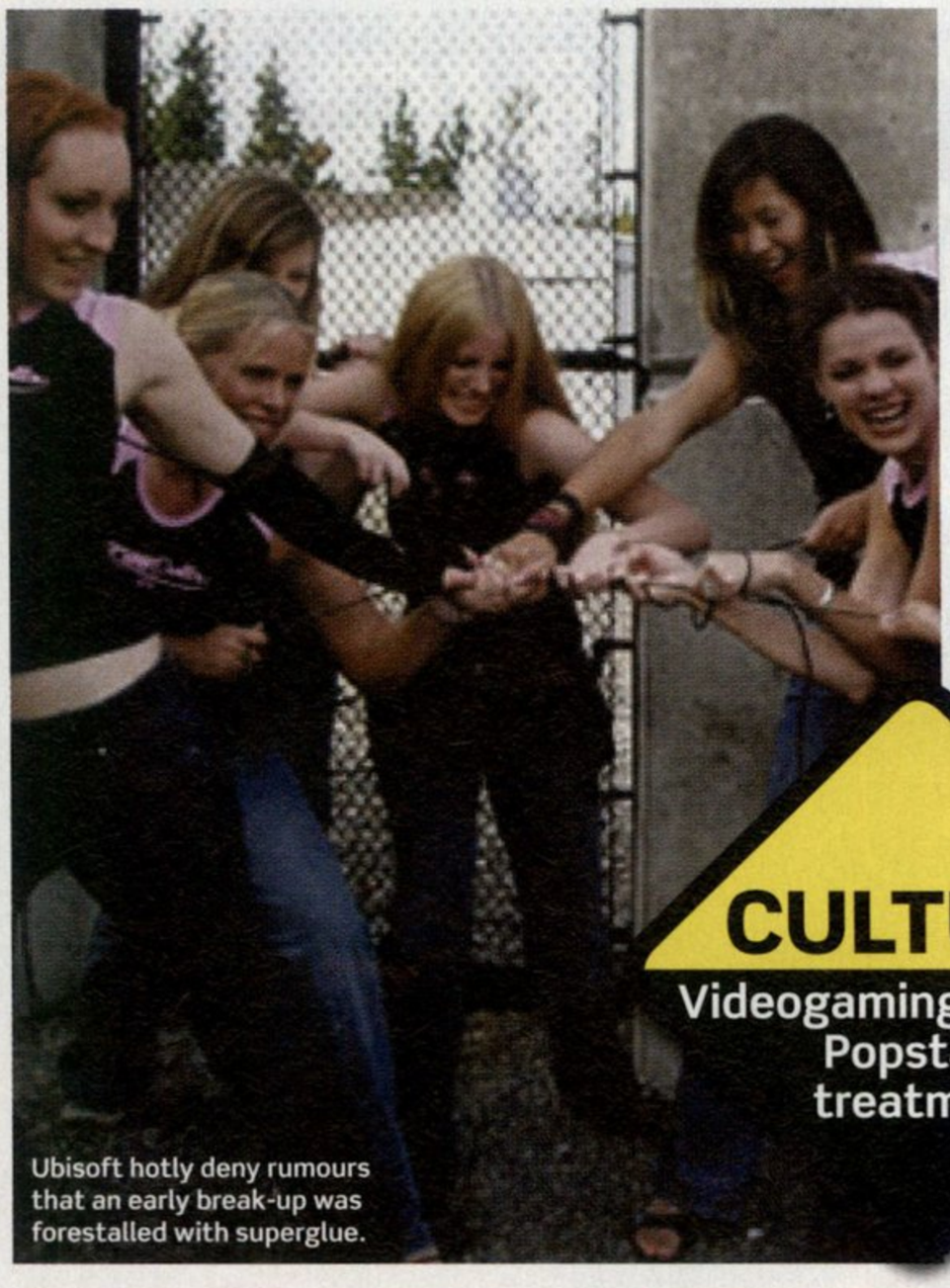
9 771449 287000 10

Reader contests

AND MORE

100% JARGON FREE

Learn more, achieve more with the official Windows XP Magazine!



CULTURE
Videogaming gets the Popstars treatment

Ubisoft hotly deny rumours that an early break-up was forestalled with superglue.

FRAGDOLL PHYSICS

Fragdolls

Who's your favourite?™

You can almost hear the corporate cogs grinding behind Ubisoft's latest venture: a gaggle of girl gamers who call themselves The Fragdolls. Young, female girl gamers.

The dolls have their own website and blog, with a surfeit of pictures and information concerning their creation. The seven have been drawn together from all corners of the globe by Ubisoft to spread the message of gaming.

There's a distinct whiff of the Spice Girls about them – an attitude that seems to come more from marketing minds than the actual personalities of the girls themselves. 'Sassy' is one word that springs to mind. Do girl gamers really respond to this sort of thing, nowadays? Or just the boys?

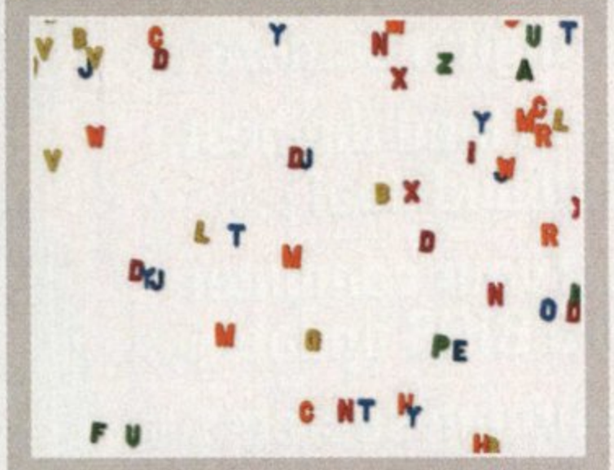
There have been a few questions raised over some of their posts, such as Seppuku Doll's: "But now I am on *SOCOM II* [Sony] for PS2 and no matter how hard I try, I can not play more than one hour without getting nauseous. I can run and shoot fine – I've even gotten MVP on a couple of rounds, but for some reason by the end of my shooting spree, I have that 'I've-been-reading-in-the-car feeling'. Ugh- it's terrible and I have no idea why. I can't wait for *Ghost Recon 2* [Ubisoft] so I can leave *SII* behind".

Now, is this really the post of a gamer? [Sceptical.]

■ www.fragdolls.com

DRAG AND DROP

JUST LETTERS



Just Letters started life as an odd online communication tool. A screenful of letters you could move wherever you wanted, spelling out words other viewers could see, as if you were sharing a communal online fridge.

It's turned into a multiplayer strategy game. Load it up and you'll find people snatching at on-screen letters as if they were made of gold. Constructing a word before someone else starts picking it apart is a challenge in itself.

Gangs start forming. There are people who want to make words, or spell out the alphabet. Others focus on colour co-ordination, or just swear and randomly swirl the letters about. If you manage to get on, you're in for a treat.

■ http://web.okaygo.co.uk/apps/letters/flashcom

What's happening in your gaming world?
Tell us your tales of gaming wonder...
dan@derwenthoward.com.au

OLD SKOOL

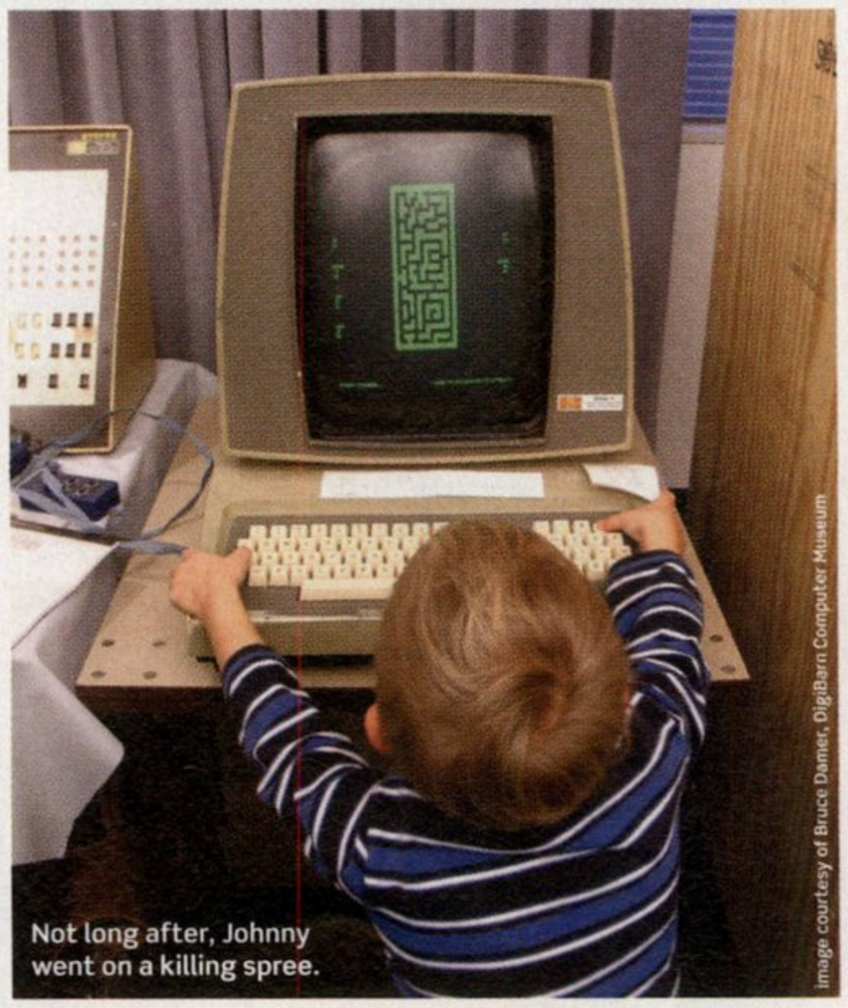
Maze War

The FPS ancestor

Twenty years Before *Doom* (BD), there was *Maze War,* the first 3D shooter. It turned 30 this year, and fans celebrated in the only way possible: a cultural fragfest, at the DigiBarn Computer Museum.

Maze War laid down a blueprint which modern deathmatch titles still follow, even though the game was coded as a side project on Imlac PDS-1 machines belonging to NASA in the '70s. Remarkably, the game was fully networked, first for two and then eight players hunting each other down in the right-angled hell of the maze. Lag problems existed but were incorporated into the game as a tactical element, while the giant eyeball avatars spat gobs of death and could ambush each other.

Bots were another startling innovation. Programmer David Lebling reminisces, "I wrote a very simple robot player that wandered through the maze looking for victims. It peeked around corners, decided which turns to take probabilistically, and turned around periodically to check its back. Robots adjusted their play based on their score, slowing down if they were beating you too badly. "You were shot by ROBOT1" was an all-too-common message.



Not long after, Johnny went on a killing spree.

Image courtesy of Bruce Damer, DigiBarn Computer Museum

The cult of *Maze War* has kept the game alive for thirty years – fans hacking together new versions for every system imaginable (The Xerox Altos anyone?). Emulated versions still exist and playing *Maze War* is like timewarping back to one of the defining moments in videogaming history.

■ http://tinyurl.com/3o5ou

BIG SCREEN ACTION

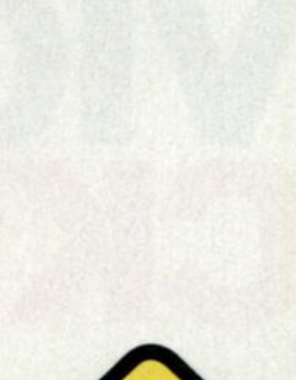
Holo-Dek

LAN of hope and glory

Gamer's paradise exists. Holo-Dek Gaming Inc is an experiment in luxurious, cinema-scale LAN gaming. Everything's catered for. The chairs are custom made, food is ordered on screen and delivered to you. Most importantly, there's the opportunity to be immersed in a high-tech multi-player experience. A 13-foot screen covers one wall, while sixteen 73-inch screens and three 100-inch screens connect to top whack gaming PCs. It's like a futuristic gentleman's club, but for everyone, and with games.

The main screen provides a 180 degree view, providing peripheral gaming vision and shoving you face first into a virtual world. The next step up is codenamed The Sphere: a huge projector ball that surrounds the player with the full 360 game screen experience. A motorised chair sits within, shuddering in tune with the on-screen violence.

CULTURE
THE GAME SHED


A sphere, yesterday.

The company plan to build hundreds of Holo-Deks all across America and hope they can rival cinemas as entertainment centres.

■ www.holo-dek.com

One hundred and eighty!

THE MEN OF MACHINIMA

LIFE AFTER RED VS. BLUE?

Rooster show their... er teeth for the cameras.

Masters of Machinima, Rooster Teeth now produce some of the most popular files on the internet. Split by circumstance, the assembled on the net and threw together **www.drunkgamers.com** and Burnie began exploring the fledgling art of making videos while playing games. Crucially, during one such session of *Halo*, Burnie asked the now immortal question: "Hey, do you ever wonder why they call it a Warthog? I think it looks more like a Puma." That line, and Burnie's persistent belief that movie making in games was a good idea, gave birth to Red vs Blue. Word spread, Matt and Joel returned to the fold and Red vs Blue began to grow into the most successful machinima series ever.

The series continues to this day. However, encouraged by their own fame and fortune, the team were determined to expand the empire, they wanted a new challenge. Then they stumbled upon *The Sims 2* at a trade show and fell in love all over again. Maxis loved them, they loved *The Sims 2*. It was a perfect marriage. The Strangerhood is their lovechild.

WHY I LOVE...

›**Game** World of Warcraft ›**Gamer** Dan Toose ›**Love affair** A sense of teamplay

WANDERING ABROAD

Making and breaking friendships as it suits me

I truly value the option to go it alone in a MMORPG, purely because I don't consider spending time waiting on people when I'm playing a game to be fun. So being able to solo a lot in *World of Warcraft* as I traversed Kalimdor and the Eastern Kingdoms as a Night Elf Hunter was great. That however doesn't mean I wound up ignoring everyone. You just can't in *WoW*, as there're several ways to spontaneously interact with others.

Since *WoW* makes getting around the world to far off lands a snap, stressing about having regular friends to group with is pointless - chances are, you'll be split up often. Fortunately, if you need a group on the road, just asking usually produces one. Just seeing another lone traveler venturing into the same area usually resulted in our hunter making a short term partnership to turn an evening long dungeon crawl a successful action-packed romp against the forces of wrongness.

I've never liked PvP much because I genuinely prefer a co-op situation, but that's just why PvP appeals to me in *WoW*. While Blizzard prepare their Battlegrounds update to open up areas that give real rewards for PvP play in a true ongoing battle, players have still indulged. Even on a non-PvP server, large enemy raiding parties can turn a routine trip to town into a the most frantic battle of the day. Lower level characters who normally don't PvP can join in to support high level NPCs and go PvP just temporarily, getting a chance to cheekily lay into a relatively omnipotent opponent.

1 WHAT A DOWNER...
Our hunter enters Blackfathom Downs, only to discover that aggressive aquatic humanoid nasties pack this dungeons subterranean caverns and waterways. Simply bumping into some other would-be-corpses just inside the entrance ended a lot of frustrations in what was a cow of a dungeon to solo.

2 THE HOME GUARD
Our triumphant hero returns to the town of Astranaar only to find it under siege by a high-level Horde rading party. Too weak to enter the fray, he lurks on the fringe, but still makes his mark. His poisoned arrows take down the raid leader who would normally smear our elf into next week. Only bones and boasts remained.

EXPERT ADVICE ON OVERCLOCKING

How to break the speed limit on your PC

HARDWARE BY ASHER MOSES & AL BICKHAM

Overclocking. A dark art? Or something any of us can dabble with? It's six of one and half a dozen of the other, really. This article is designed to demystify the process, show you how, and help you work out whether you should… or shouldn't.

But first up, let's talk about why you might overclock. The simple answer is to squeeze more speed out of your existing hardware. A less talked-about reason, but still a pertinent one, is essentially that it gives you bragging rights. Like any form of technical twiddling, it's a rewarding process, which you can be proud of. How many forum-posts have you seen with people's specs in the sig-bar saying something like "P4 2.8GHz @ 3.2 GHz?" But we'll put the feel-good factor aside for a moment, and first concentrate on the physical gains to be had.

While it's often talked of in hushed tones, there are few real myths about overclocking. All the obvious stuff you already suspect is true – that it stresses your components; that it can make your system unstable; that you can fry your CPU; that it involves BIOS and motherboard tweaks. It requires caution, but if you are careful and take it slowly, you can spot when your components are struggling, and throttle back your overclocking before you cause any damage. Likewise, motherboards and BIOS alterations are nothing to be afraid of. You simply need to know what you're doing, and how to reset your system to default settings if it starts falling over.

> It's a rewarding process you can be proud of

But before you embark on an overclocking project, run through this three-point checklist, and work out whether you can, or indeed *should* continue with the procedure:

1. Do I need to overclock? Well, do you? If you're packing a fat rig with an FX-53 CPU and a Radeon X800, what's the point? Your PC will play the most technically challenging games in the world, so it hardly seems worth it. For those with slower systems, it's more of a consideration. However, unless you're using some powerful cooling solutions (more on this shortly) you're never going to get that much extra performance. You have to start spending a lot of money, or put up with a fan-packed and therefore very noisy computer, before you'll start seeing serious gains.

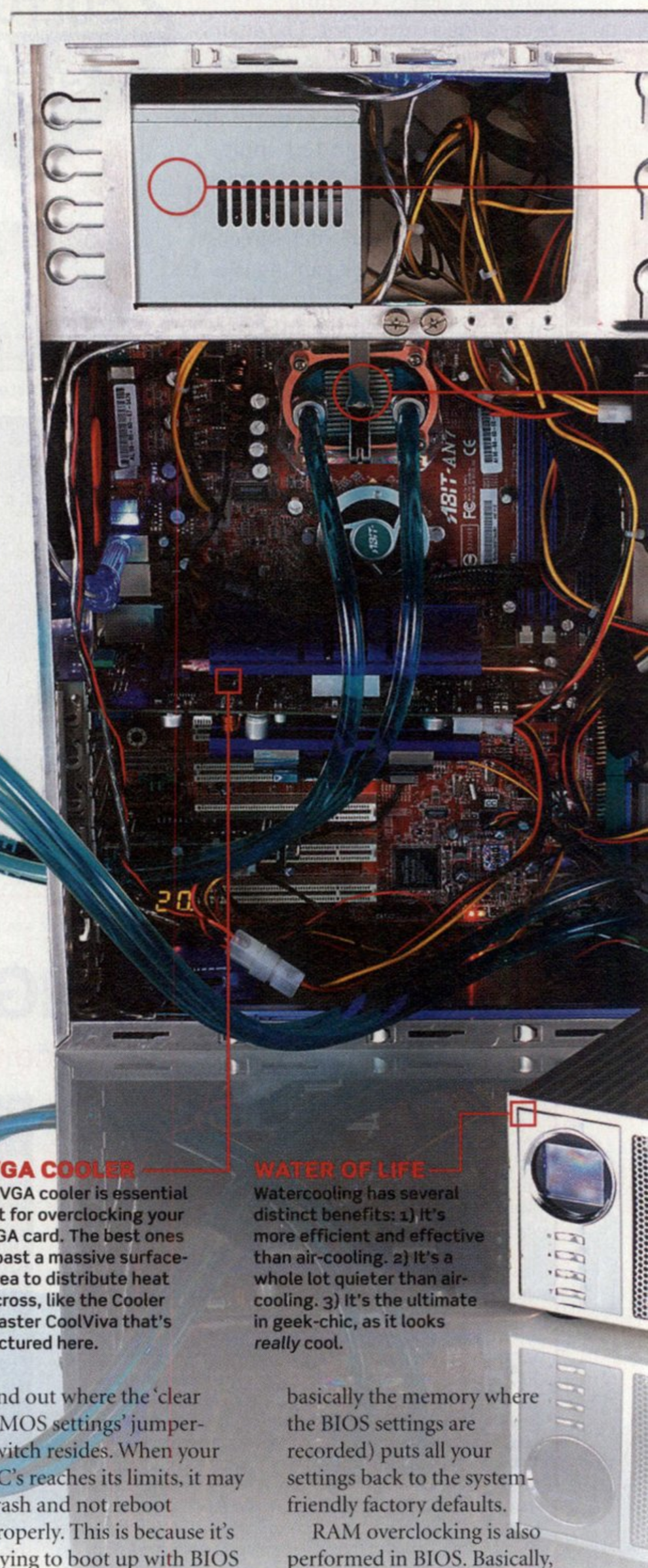
ON THE DISC The PC GAMES ADDICT toolkit contains a few goodies to help bench your beast > Toolkit

2. Can I overclock? Certain hardware is locked, and simply *cannot* be tinkered with. This includes many shop-bought systems, such as those provided by Dell and other manufacturers. It also includes certain processor types – such as the Athlon XP Barton core and certain flavours of P4 CPU. Quote your system specs on one of several overclocking forums to find out whether your bits and bobs can actually be made to run faster.

3. Have I got enough cooling? Overclocking components without upgrading from stock cooling solutions is bad juju. Overclocking involves forcing components to run faster, and pumping higher voltages into them to fuel the enhanced activity. As components run faster and more current passes through, they get hotter. Heat causes resistance, performance then drops, processing errors occur and you risk burning out your components. The net result is that without extra cooling, you simply won't see any appreciable performance gains, and you run higher risks. We'll examine some supplementary cooling solutions overleaf, to give you an idea of the kind of systems required.

If you're still considering overclocking, there's one more piece of knowledge that is absolutely essential. Read your motherboard manual to find out where the 'clear CMOS settings' jumper-switch resides. When your PC's reaches its limits, it may crash and not reboot properly. This is because it's trying to boot up with BIOS settings that it can't handle. Clearing the CMOS (Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor – basically the memory where the BIOS settings are recorded) puts all your settings back to the system-friendly factory defaults.

RAM overclocking is also performed in BIOS. Basically, the speed your RAM runs at is dictated by its set ratio to the front-side bus (FSB) speed of your system. So, if



VGA COOLER
A VGA cooler is essential kit for overclocking your VGA card. The best ones boast a massive surface-area to distribute heat across, like the Cooler Master CoolViva that's pictured here.

WATER OF LIFE
Watercooling has several distinct benefits: 1) It's more efficient and effective than air-cooling. 2) It's a whole lot quieter than air-cooling. 3) It's the ultimate in geek-chic, as it looks *really* cool.

SYSTEMS README

>WHY AM I HERE? Overclocking can increase the performance of you current gaming PC.

>RISK FACTOR? Tamper with your PC and you might lose...

The family cat | Your fave jumper | Your temper | Your religion | Your manhood | Your will to live

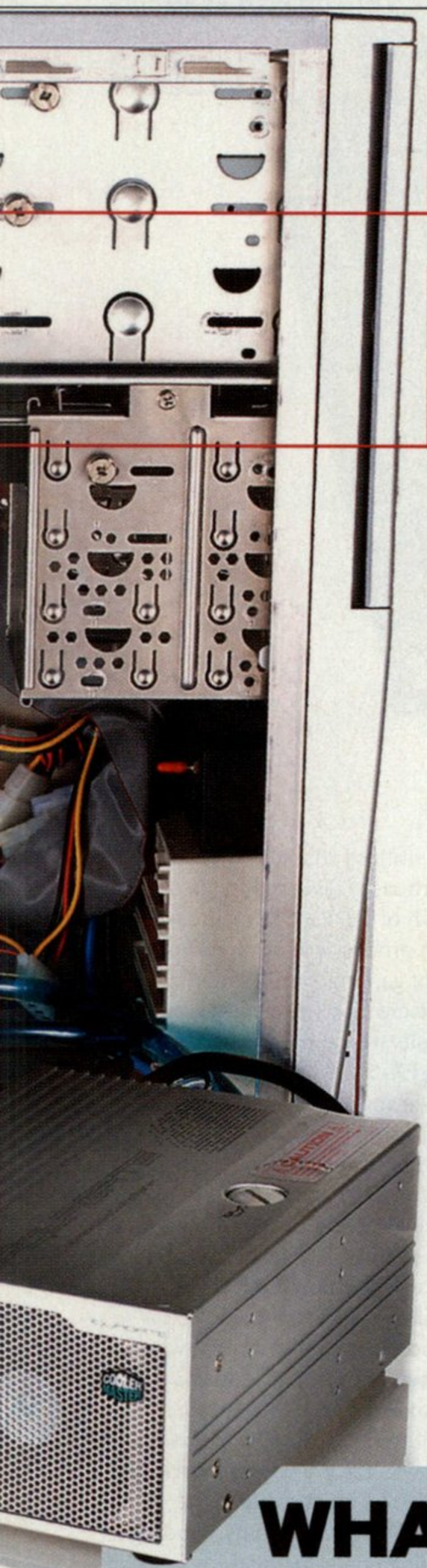
>IS IT EASY? Try it if you're clever enough to understand...

Knock knock jokes | Soap operas | VideoPlus | Cricket | French | Bocce

>SELL IT TO ME... No longer a black art, if approached carefully overclocking's a cheap way to keep your gaming PC up to speed.

PC GAMES ADDICT DICTIONARY THE OED OF GAMING

BIOS: Basic In-Out System › Your CPU's most basic operating system. BIOS settings dictate how your components work. Access by holding DEL at startup.
CMOS: Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor › The bit of your motherboard that stores your BIOS settings. You'll need to know how to reset this if everything goes wrong.
CPU › Your Central Processing Unit, or processor. When it comes to overclocking, you need to find out whether your CPU-type is 'multiplier locked', ie, doesn't let you overclock it.
GPU › Graphics Processing Unit – your 3D card's onboard processor. This can be overclocked like a CPU, but it's easier to do it in windows using ATItool or RivaTuner.
Frontside Bus › The speed at which your components parley with each other. The faster your FSB, the better your overall system performance will be.



ULTIMATE POWER
Extra cooling and extra juice being pumped into your components requires more power. If you're setting up a full overclocking rig with stacks of fans, we recommend at least a 420Watt PSU.

CPU POLICE
Check your CPU to see if it can actually be overclocked – many are locked. If you can go ahead, there's little you need to do hardware-wise – except install a higher grade cooling system – as the real overclocking wizardry is conjured in the BIOS.

you have an FSB of 200MHz and your memory ratio in BIOS is set at 1:1, then your RAM will be running at 200MHz. Set your ratio to 5:6 however, and it'll be running at 240MHz. Once again, your BIOS memory ratio settings should be changed in increments, and the RAM voltage should also be incrementally increased to cover the extra work the memory is doing. And every time you make a change, boot your system fully and let it run to see if it's stable.

There are various tweak-tools on offer which you can use to overclock your 3D card in windows. For ATI we recommend ATITool (www.techpowerup.com/atitool) and Rivatuner (www.guru3d.com/rivatuner) works well for both ATI and nVidia cards. The bits of your 3D card that should be speeded up are the GPU (graphics processing unit – your 3D card's CPU) and your card's onboard RAM. These you can tweak using the aforementioned tools – but again, only tweak them in small increments. You'll soon know if the card's starting to struggle, as artefacts will appear on the screen – errant pixels, polygons, and other flickering weirdness. If this happens, immediately throttle back to a stable setting, and don't attempt to climb higher again – your card doesn't like it.

A final word… If you've overclocked and your system is stable, then great. But are you happy with the results? If there are noticeable gains in game performance, then brilliant. If there aren't, then you may as well throttle your system back to its defaults, as it'll cause your components less stress in the long term. Benchmarking with Aquamark and 3Dmark is useful, as it demonstrates your gains in numerical terms, but in the end, it's perception that counts.

For those who want massive overclocking, you're looking at some seriously expensive kit, like Vapochill refrigeration systems – they run to over $1,000 a pop but can cool to sub-zero temperatures. How much you can do really depends on how much you spend.

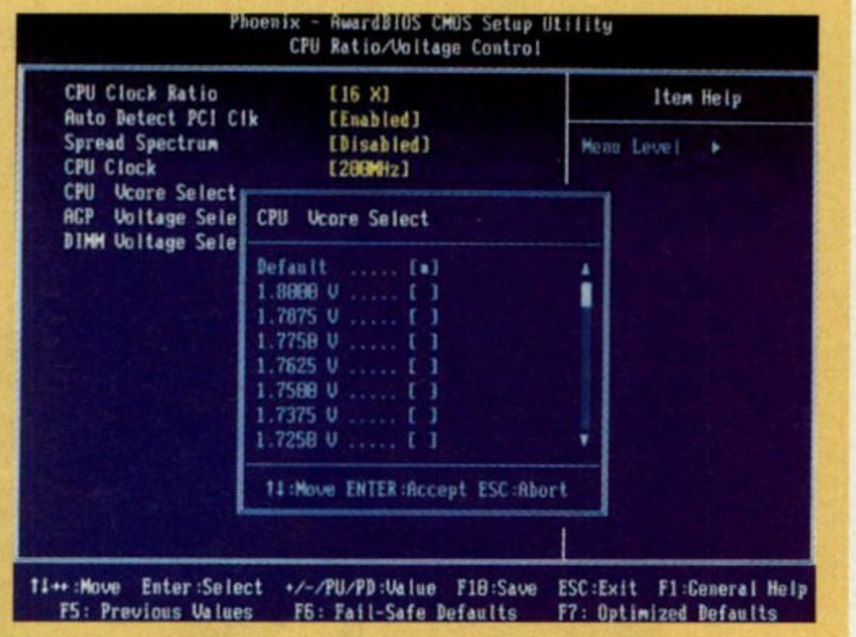
Want a tech topic covered?
Then mail your request to:
asher@derwenthoward.com.au

WHAT NEXT...?

› Name that motherboard. Click start/run then type dxdiag and hit return to find out what you've got.
› **Locate the board's CMOS reset switch using the circuit diagram or manual.**
› Record all your settings – CPU multiplier, clock and bus speeds, memory ratios, graphics card GPU and memory speeds, and all voltage settings. Every time you make a change, mark it down, so you know where you are.
› **Get help from a variety of overclocking sites, such as www.overclockers.com.au, www.tweakers.com.au , www.hardocp.com, and www.extremeoverclocking.com.**

MASTERCLASS

How to... Overclock your CPU today


Phoenix - AwardBIOS CMOS Setup Utility
CPU Ratio/Voltage Control
CPU Clock Ratio [16 X]
Auto Detect PCI Clk [Enabled]
Spread Spectrum [Disabled]
CPU Clock [200MHz]
CPU Vcore Select
AGP Voltage Sele
DIMM Voltage Sele
Item Help
Menu Level ▸
CPU Vcore Select
Default [*]
1.8000 V [ ]
1.7875 V [ ]
1.7750 V [ ]
1.7625 V [ ]
1.7500 V [ ]
1.7375 V [ ]
1.7250 V [ ]
↑↓:Move ENTER:Accept ESC:Abort
↑↓→←:Move Enter:Select +/-/PU/PD:Value F10:Save ESC:Exit F1:General Help
F5: Previous Values F6: Fail-Safe Defaults F7: Optimized Defaults

Your CPU is the brainy bit of your system, and largely dictates your system performance. It therefore follows that you'll get the best performance gains by overclocking your CPU.

Some motherboard manufacturers supply software to enable you to overclock by tweaking BIOS in windows (e.g. Abit's uGuru system). However, we still recommend you overclock in BIOS itself, as it's best to learn what you're doing before you change anything. A CPU's speed in MHz relies on two factors: bus speed and multiplier. You can alter both in BIOS. Here's how it works.

You've got a CPU that runs at 2.2GHz. This is because it has a bus speed of 200Mhz, and a multiplier of 11. 200Mhz X 11 = 2200Mhz. Now it's these two values that you can tinker with in BIOS to get more performance out of your processor. Set your multiplier to 11.5 for example, and bus speed to 205, you've got a CPU running at 2357Mhz.

Think of it as an engine – you're making it rev harder. But to do this, an engine need more petrol; if it doesn't have enough fuel, it stalls. That's where BIOS CPU voltage settings come in. With more voltage, your CPU makes less errors, and runs with greater stability... but gets hotter. As you incrementally increase your multiplier and bus speeds, you need to increase your voltage input, also in BIOS. CPU cooling is vital.

Ultimately, every hardware setup is slightly different, and the combination of bus speed and multiplier is largely found through trial and error. And remember, NEVER increase any BIOS values in anything other than incremental amounts.

Every time you increase a value, save your settings, restart, and let your PC boot into windows. If it's stable under pressure, i.e. while playing games, then thumbs up; if it's not, then reset, head back to BIOS, and try a different approach – like dropping your multiplier and increasing your CPU 's bus speed, for example.

USEFUL OVERCLOCKERS TOOLS

Cpu-z Tells you, in windows, the nitty gritty such as FSB speed and RAM speed. **www.cpuid.com**

CPU Burn-In Useful for temperature-monitoring. **http://users.bigpond.net.au/cpuburn/**

3Dmark03 A useful graphics and CPU performance benchmarking tool. **www.futuremark.com**

Aquamark 3 Another useful graphics and CPU tool, less hassle than 3Dmark. **www.aquamark3.com**

ATITool A neat ATI-card overclocking tool with an excellent interface. **www.techpowerup.com/atitool**

Rivatuner A 3D Card overclocking tool that works for ATI and Nvidia cards. **www.guru3d.com/rivatuner**

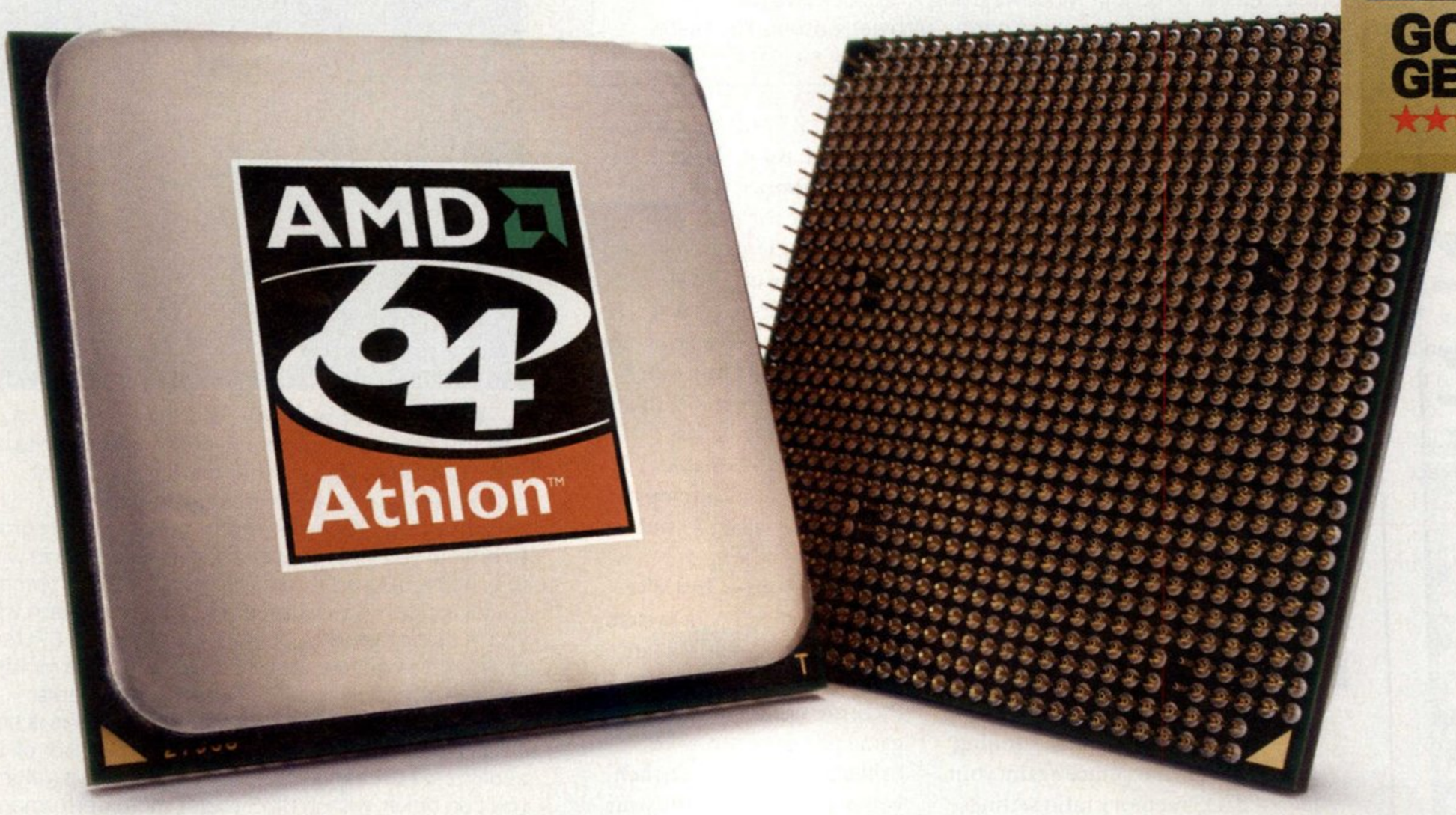
64 bits of bliss

ATHLON 64 4000+ & ATHLON 64 FX-55

$TBA

AMD Australia www.amd.com (02) 8877 7222

PC GAMES GOLD GEAR ★★★★★



Much to the dismay of Intel, ever since the Athlon 64 FX processor debuted a little over a year ago, AMD has dominated the desktop CPU market, particularly in the high-end space. Not only has it held a performance advantage, but its processors have continually provided better value for money than Intel's offerings. Although Intel gained some ground with its release of the Extreme Edition range, AMD was the clear winner of 2004 as far as enthusiasts and gamers are concerned. More recently, AMD processors have undergone a transition from Socket 940 to Socket 939 (meaning you'll need to upgrade your motherboard), but the core internal architecture has remained unchanged.

Looking to increase its performance lead even further, AMD has just released two new processors, the Athlon 64 4000+ and the Athlon 64 FX-55, both being minor speed increments over their predecessors, clocked at 2.4GHz and 2.6GHz respectively. However, with these speed increases come a number of modifications to the traditional Athlon 64 design. Firstly, the primary point of difference between the Athlon 64 and Athlon 64 FX has always been the fact that the Athlon 64 boasts 512K of L2 cache, while the FX version features 1MB L2 cache. Thus, while both often ran at similar clock speeds, the FX always had the performance advantage, being AMD's flagship, high-end processor. However, with the Athlon 64 4000+, AMD has decided to bump the L2 cache up to 1MB, and at 2.4GHz, this makes it little more than an Athlon 64 FX-53. It appears that AMD has decided to retire its surpassed FX chips to the Athlon 64 line – a morally questionable move but nonetheless saves AMD a significant amount of money, which will be felt positively by consumers through lower prices.

As far as the Athlon 64 FX-55 is concerned, not much has changed aside from the clock speed increase. As with all previous FX chips, the FX-55 comes with a factory unlocked multiplier (potentially yielding higher speeds for overclockers), which is one of the reasons why, historically, many enthusiasts have shelled out the extra cash for the FX version.

Since both processors are targeted at the high-end sector, their performance must be on par with competing models, and thus we tested each alongside Intel's current flagship chip, the Pentium 4 560 (3.6GHz). Both test systems had identical base components, however motherboards and memory used varied due to differences in platforms. Specifically, the AMD system was equipped with an Abit NF8 motherboard (reviewed this issue) and 1GB of DDR400 memory, while the Intel system utilized an Asus P5AD2-E motherboard (reviewed last issue) and 1GB of DDR2-533 memory.

Each processor was run through a slew of gaming, business and content-creation benchmarks, and the results were quite predictable. The Athlon FX-55 is clearly the fastest processor money can currently buy, outperforming the P4 560 in every test. On the other hand, the Athlon 64 4000+'s performance was on par with the P4 560 in most tests, but this is understandable considering that the 4000+ will be a notably cheaper chip.

While it's clear that the FX-55 is the processor to buy for those who have deep pockets and demand performance, the 4000+ is more difficult to rate as its performance is identical to the FX-53, yet its price is likely to be greater due to the release of the FX-55. Thus, pending Australian retail pricing info on each chip, our overall rating has been based on performance alone, but whether or not it'll be great value remains to be seen.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 90%

VALUE N/A

› Top performance, but at what cost?

90%

Causing a stir
THERMALTAKE SHARK
$260

Anyware www.anyware.com.au **(02) 9879 5788**

PC GAMES GOLD GEAR ★★★★★

If you've been keeping a close eye on the PCGA hardware section in recent issues, you'll have noticed a recent appearence Thermaltake casing products. Product line after product line, we've found them extremely difficult to fault due to their awesome aesthetics and abundance of features. Thermaltake's latest foray into the PC enclosure market is no different, and hence its aggressive 'shark' branding is quite apt.

Let's begin with the externals. Available in black or silver, the Shark's finish defies its initial appearance in that it's quite rough, making it virtually immune to fingerprints. Additionally, a smooth aluminum hinged door neatly conceals the drive bays and switches (and can be locked for added security), while the cleverly placed blue LEDs (shown in the above photograph) will catch many a nod of approval from passers-by.

The now mandatory front I/O ports are also present, specifically two USB 2.0 ports, headphone and microphone jacks, and a firewire port. The usefulness of these cannot be over-stated.

While Plexiglas windows have become very popular in recent years, Thermaltake's decided to ditch this idea, instead adopting a side fan grill which serves to bring in cool outside air as well as providing voyeuristic access to internal components.

Another cool feature of the Shark is pre-cut holes for water-cooling hoses, highlighting the huge popularity of extreme cooling amongst enthusiasts. Not an avid power tool user? No need to worry here!

Moving inside, the case boasts five 5.25" and two 3.5" tool-less drive bays, as well as an additional five hard drive bays – perfect for a RAID configuration. In addition, these hard drive bays lie perpendicular to the length of the case, which helps to greatly reduce cable clutter and increase airflow. Each hard-drive bay is removable and all vibration is dissipated through rubber washers.

Recognizing that today's PCs are running hotter than ever, ThermalTake has provided two 120mm side intake fans, as well as a front exhaust fan, ensuring that cool air is constantly being brought in and hot air pumped out. This proved to be quite effective as it was in this case that we recorded some of our lowest system temperatures to date.

Installation of components is painless, aided by a removable motherboard tray, smooth edges, and the fact that all screws can be opened without the use of a screwdriver.

One issue we've had with Thermaltake cases in the past is that their weight detracts from portability somewhat, but thankfully this isn't the case here (pun intended) as much of the Shark is constructed from aluminum. In fact, the entire unit only weighs 6.8kg (albeit, without a system installed).

One feature the Shark lacks is a power supply, which brings an added cost to the user on top of the case's sale price. That said, this isn't an issue for most gamers who regularly update their systems and thus, can simply recycle their previous unit. It's a good opportunity to look at investing in a top-notch power unit, something not enough people do.

At $260 the Shark certainly isn't cheap, and many may be able to live without such a bold external appearance and such an abundance of features. However, if you're an enthusiast and won't settle for second best, you'll be hard pressed to find a chassis that's more appealing.

REVIEW CRITERIA

WE'RE LOOKING FOR...

- **Interior Access** How easy or difficult is it to work on your system's internal hardware?
- **Cooling** Keeping your system cool is a priority, so are there enough case fans to prevent overheating?
- **Looks** The way your case looks reflects on you - Are you comely or cringe-worthy?
- **Convenience** Are there front-mounted ports and connectors for pads and joysticks to make gaming more comfortable?
- **Portability** What kind of travelling companion is it when you head to a LAN party? Hernia-inducing or light as a feather?
- **Bonuses** What do you get for your money? Is the case empty or are the requisite fans and power supply thrown in?

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 95%
VALUE 90%

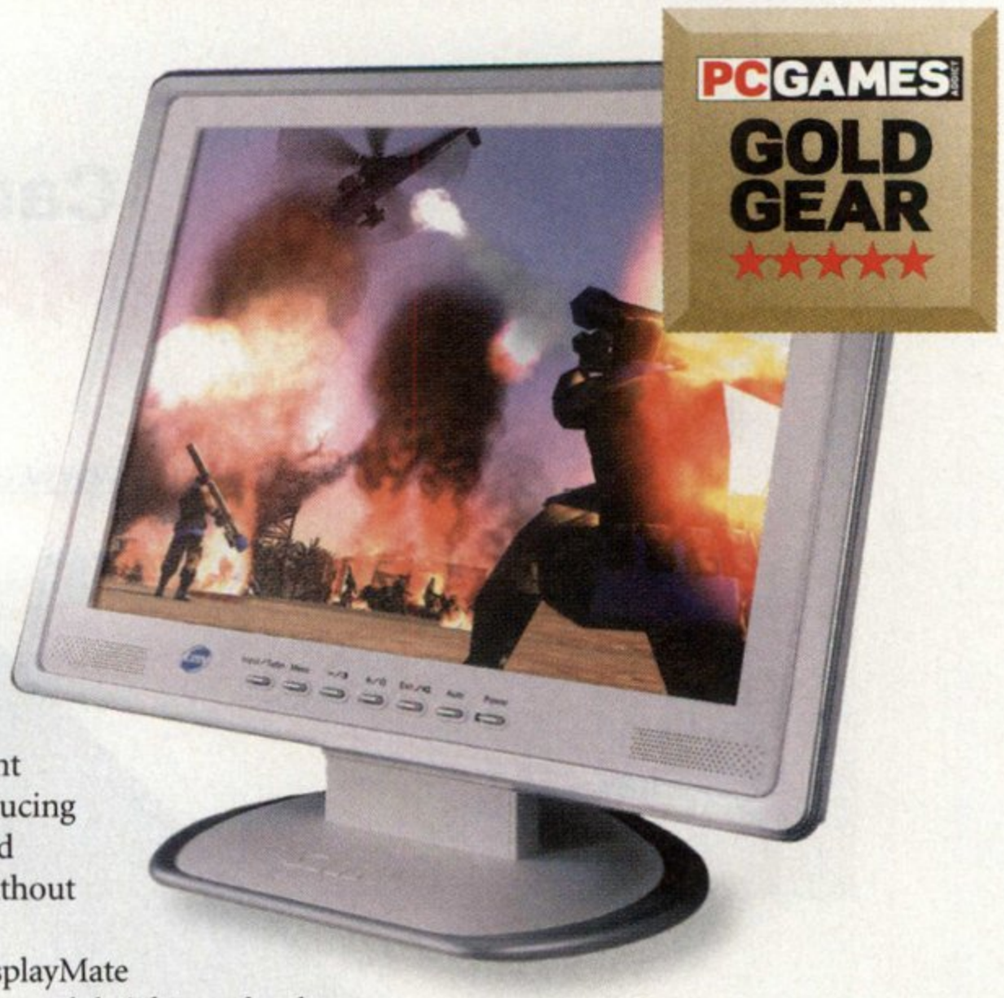
92%

› Dead in the water? Hell no!

Saying goodbye to ghosting
CMV CT-720D 8MS LCD
$425

Impact Systems www.impactsystems.com.au

(02) 9621 2999



The ancient CRT's days are well and truly numbered, with the recent influx of 8ms LCD panels negating 'ghosting' issues traditionally associated with higher pixel response times, and therefore any substantial reason to purchase a CRT over an LCD monitor (disregarding price). The first 8ms LCD panel to hit Australian shores is the CMV CT-720D.

At $425, the CT-720D represents awesome value yet still meets the needs of the hardcore gamer, featuring both D-Sub and DVI connectors (all cabling is included), as well as a brightness specification of 450cm/m2, a contrast ratio of 500:1 and a pair of 2.5W speakers. Although these speakers are adequate for native Windows sounds it's worth investing in a set of headphones or speakers as both bass and clarity are lackluster, particularly at high volume levels.

The panel boasts a native resolution of 1280x1024 - standard for a 17-inch TFT panel – as well as the aesthetically pleasing two-tone bezel that shows CMV clearly drawing on the success of Apple's iPod design, and a control panel which boasts, among others, the staple brightness, contrast and colour adjustments.

Physical adjustments are fairly limited, with users being able to tilt the screen slightly but not adjust the height or switch between portrait and landscape modes. This is a somewhat disappointing oversight but it's unlikely to cause much of an uproar.

Gaming and DVD playback tests showed the panel to be extremely competent at reproducing fast-paced action without blurring, while DisplayMate revealed superb brightness levels and rich, vibrant colour reproduction – the most important considerations when purchasing a TFT monitor. However, the panel did have some minor difficulty reproducing shades at the extreme ends of the colour scale, with some tan-coloured shades appearing as white and some dark purple shades appearing as black. That said, this will likely go undetected outside of a synthetic benchmark environment for most users.

While it isn't fault-free, the CT-720D's high performance and excellent value make it an ideal purchase for any gamer looking to retire their cumbersome CRT monitor once and for all.

PC GAMES
PERFORMANCE 90%
VALUE 95%
›CRT, be gone!
91%

Your equipment holding you back?

Custom Cases

www.customcases.com.au

Cooling • Lighting • Case Modifications

Biometrical Beauty

MICROSOFT OPTICAL DESKTOP WITH FINGERPRINT READER

$180

Microsoft Australia www.microsoft.com.au **13 20 58**

We humans are becoming ever more vulnerable at the 'hands' of our computers, with Microsoft's latest keyboard innovation being a testament to this. Combining both password security and biometrics, the Microsoft Optical Desktop with Fingerprint Reader allows users to have access to all of their online passwords at the tip of a finger, literally. But we'll get to that in a second.

Firstly, the kit comes with both a wired keyboard and a wireless optical mouse. The keyboard boasts a full set of well-spaced keys, as well as the usual array of multimedia buttons, most of which are designed to be coupled with Microsoft's software suites. For example, there are a number of navigational buttons for Windows Media Player, as well as buttons for navigation to default Windows folders and applications such as My Documents, My Pictures, My Music, Outlook, Internet Explorer and Windows Messenger. In addition to this, Microsoft has included five un-assigned "favorites" buttons that can be used to add shortcuts to your most used applications, and the 'F' keys boast an array of useful functions for use with Microsoft's Office suite.

The three-buttoned mouse doesn't offer much in terms of innovation, aside from its tilt-wheel technology which enables users to scroll through documents in all directions. That said, its excellent design fits the hand perfectly and gaming performance is reasonable, bar the rare skipping that accompanies most wireless mice during fast-paced action.

Installation of the device is patronizingly simple, with Microsoft's software being intuitive enough to guide most users through the process of configuring the fingerprint sensor with ease. Once the DigitalPersona application has taken a snapshot of the finger you've selected to use for authentication, upon reaching a login screen simply press your finger onto the sensor and you'll be prompted to enter your username and password. From then on, all subsequent login attempts are handled automatically, and the only user-intervention required is the press of a finger.

Being Microsoft's first foray into the fingerprint reader space, the technology isn't perfect, as it's often necessary to touch the fingerprint sensor multiple times before it recognises that you're an authorised user. That said, it's far better than we expected and will only improve as the software matures.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 80%
VALUE 75%

83%

›Three cheers for innovation!

Back from the dead

RESTORE-A-DISC

$79.95

DiskDoctor www.diskdoctor.com.au **1300 855 850**

If your computer desk looks anything like ours, chances are you've got a plethora of uncased discs littering every square inch, gathering dust (and inevitably, scratches) until the next time you manage to muster the fortitude to perform a full-scale cleanup (read: never). Therefore, by the time you end up using any of them again, your favorite DVD film may start skipping or stop working altogether halfway through, and your smooth beats will stutter erratically.

While nothing can fix a disc that's exploded into a thousand pieces as a result of a faulty optical drive, the light-to-medium scratches that cause the issues described above can easily be repaired using a cleaning product such as the Restore-A-Disc.

Looking much like an ancient Sony Discman, the Restore-A-Disc is capable of repairing all optical media using one of three "scrubbing wheels" – clean, repair or polish.

We tested the Restore-A-Disc using a variety of tarnished media ranging from audio CDs to DVD discs. Each of these discs varied in their condition, as we wanted to test the device's ability to repair both shallow and deeper scratches.

It took about two minutes to clean a disc, and the whole process is fairly painless with the user being required only to place a few drops of the provided cleaning solution onto the wheel and press the 'repair' button.

Each disc tested, no matter how deep the scratches came out looking and performing brand new, however, the deeply scratched audio CD required the use of both the repair and the polishing wheels, after which all skipping issues were rectified.

When all is said and done, the Restore-A-Disc is perfect for repairing general use scratches, but don't expect it to perform miracles if you happen to lacerate a disc with a butcher's knife.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 85%
VALUE 80%

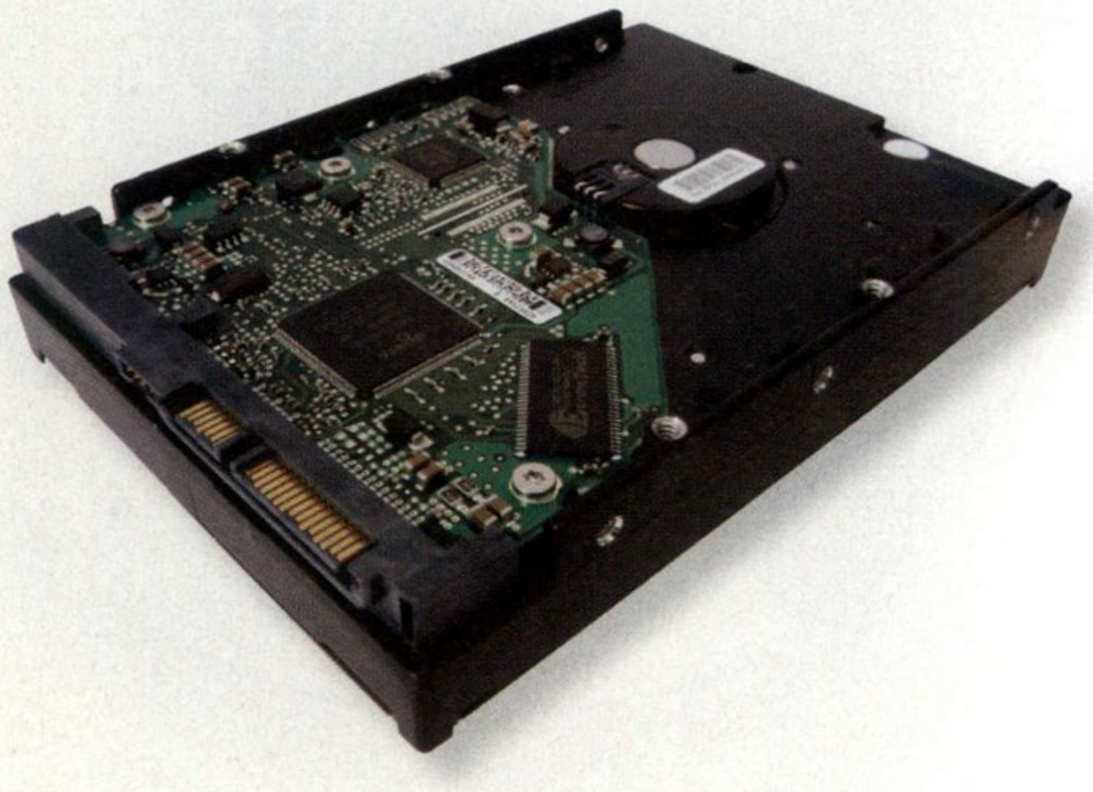
85%

›Immortality, take it, it's yours!

Join the queue
SEAGATE BARRACUDA 160GB NCQ
$189.95

Seagate Australia www.seagate-asia.com

(02) 9748 7430



The Serial ATA revolution has practically phased out the ageing parallel ATA interface that's been with us since the dawn of personal computing - thanks to huge motherboard manufacturer support and rapidly decreasing prices. Now begins the maturing process, whereby drive manufacturers continue to improve on the technology in order to provide even more reason to upgrade.

As hinted by the title of this review, the first innovation comes from Seagate and has been dubbed "Native Command Queuing" or NCQ. In order to understand how this technology can benefit the average user, it's important to know how a hard drive actually works. Put simply, hard drives read/write data to platters, which spin to the appropriate position in order for the drive head to perform read/write operations. The resulting delay, which is around 4-5ms for an average 7200 RPM drive (an eternity in computing terms), is known as the rotational latency. While traditionally this latency has been reduced by increasing the rotational speed (e.g. to 15,000 RPM), this isn't a mechanically sound process and thus, Seagate has developed NCQ as an alternative. NCQ, as opposed to executing I/O requests in the order that they're received, re-orders tasks based on their proximity to the current drive head position, thus effectively reducing latency immensely.

To determine whether NCQ makes any tangible improvements to performance, we tested Seagate's 160GB 7200.7 NCQ drive against a regular Seagate 160GB 7200.7 drive that lacks NCQ. To benchmark, we used a variety of applications including HDTach, Business Winstone 2004 and Content Creation Winstone 2004. Before we begin our analysis of these results, please note that for NCQ to work at all you'll need a relatively recent system, as chipset-level support for the technology has only just come out with Intel's 900-series of chipsets, and is also present in Nvidia's nForce 4 as well as SiS's latest southbridge.

In all of our tests, the performance improvements provided by NCQ were less than 1%, highlighting the fact that the technology isn't entirely necessary outside of a multi-user environment where I/O profiles are more randomly placed. Furthermore, our tests also indicate that NCQ is of little use to gamers, and will even hinder performance in some cases.

Therefore, while as a complete package Seagate's 160GB NCQ drive performs on par with other drives of a similar specification, we have little reason to recommend it over its competition - aside from the strong Seagate brand and more than reasonable 5-year warranty.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 70%
VALUE 75%
73%
› Much ado about nothing

May the force be with you
ABIT NF8
$179

Altech Computers www.altech.com.au (02) 9735 5655

As far as the Athlon 64 is concerned, the VIA K8T800 chipset has enjoyed almost total market dominance for some time now – due mainly to a lack of solid competition from the Nvidia nForce3 150. With the release of the nForce 3 250Gb chipset this is all set to change, and the first board to hit our labs is the Abit NF8.

Some of the chipset's notable features are Serial ATA (including RAID that can span across both SATA and ATA drives), Gigabit Ethernet, a hardware firewall and faster HyperTransport (16-bit and 800Mhz on both the upload and download – matching the K8T800). Being the first of its kind, the hardware firewall is particularly impressive as it reduces CPU utilization issues and can protect a machine even before Windows is loaded, unlike a software version.

The Abit NF8 integrates all of these features and more, such as onboard 6-channel audio (decent sound quality, but it won't beat a dedicated PCI solution), five PCI slots, AGP 8x support and six USB 2.0 headers. Furthermore, in usual Abit style the BIOS is replete with all of the tweaking options an overclocker could desire, including an AGP/PCI lock which enables greater FSB overclocking without individual PCI/AGP cards becoming a burden.

The board's layout is both convenient and logical, with power and drive headers being placed in positions which serve to avoid cable clutter, and the AGP slot placed so that it does not impede the first PCI slot when a larger card is installed.

As far as performance is concerned, our tests revealed that the difference between the nForce 3 and K8T800 chipsets is now negligible, thanks to the improved HyperTransport link. However, it's important to note that this doesn't make either chipset more desirable, and you'll have to research the merits of boards from each individual manufacturer in order to make a more accurate decision.

Regardless of this, the NF8's robust arsenal of features, great performance, good layout and strong overclocking makes it a prime contender for inclusion in your next AMD-based system.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 92%
VALUE 85%
90%
› You won't be 'forced' to buy this one!

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GEAR ★★★★★

WIN with the Powerhouse Museum!

Powerhouse Museum
presents

THE LORD OF THE RINGS™ MOTION PICTURE TRILOGY
THE EXHIBITION

- A Sharp 32" LCD television LC32G2X and a Sharp DVD player DVSL10X.
- The Return of the King Collector's Gift Set
- Playstation2 The Return of the King and The Two Towers games or PC The Return of the King Games

To enter, simply SMS the key word

Boromir

to 1999 LOTR

Maximum SMS cost is 55 cents (incl GST).

Amazing prizes to win!
Total value over $7400!

Entries close midnight on 23 March 2005.

Authorised under NSW Permit No: TPL 04/11902; ACT TP 04/4757; VIC permit 04/3456; and SA Permit T04/4656
For full terms and conditions please visit www.powerhousemuseum.com/lotr

phm powerhouse museum
celebrating 125 years

TE PAPA

Developed and presented by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in partnership with New Line Cinema.

NEW LINE CINEMA
A Time Warner Company

This exhibition was made possible through the support of the New Zealand Government.

Local sponsors

AIR NEW ZEALAND

SHARP

START A CONVERSATION
The Sydney Morning Herald

2 for 1 admission

Purchase one adult or one child admission and receive one FREE admission of equal or lesser value.

Simply present this coupon when you buy tickets at the Powerhouse Museum. Coupon is valid until 31 March 2005.

TROUBLESHOOT YOUR GAMES

Sometimes even the best titles don't work out of the box

BY ASHER MOSES & JON HICKS

DO IT... NOW!

Fix Dawn of War

PERFORMANCE

PROBLEM Performance problems are hindering your ability to witness hot ork action
REMEDY Disable the offending features
RESULT Runs as smoothly as the boardgame, and no scuffling over the rules

So, you're all set up to crunch some skulls, but you just can't get *Dawn of War* working. As ever, there are plenty of possible problems, but the opener is pleasingly simple: it doesn't like being put anywhere where the demo or the beta are already, so make sure both are long gone from your hard drive.

With that out of the way, a host of other problems may still plague you. If you've got a newish Intel CPU and AC97 onboard sound, you might be experiencing stuttering audio; this can be cured by disabling hyperthreading in the BIOS (you should be able to get to this by hitting DEL during startup; see your motherboard manual.)

Elsewhere on the bug list, ATi's spangly new VPU Recovery feature has been implicated in a few post-crash investigations. If you're running Catalyst 3.8 drivers or later and your game has been appearing in low resolution or crashing to desktop, try right-clicking on the desktop, choosing Properties > Settings > Advanced > VPU Recover and uncheck the offending option. If that still doesn't work, try unchecking 'Disable Write Combining' in the Troubleshooting tab.

ON THE DISC Keep your PC in peak condition with our hand-picked selection of apps and utilities > Toolkit

Relic have also indicated there might be problems with newer AGP drivers with ATi graphics and AMD CPUs. If your Athlon/Radeon combo is experiencing constant crashing, try right-clicking My Computer and choosing Properties > Hardware > Device Manager > System Devices. Look for the AGP driver; if it's the one that came with your motherboard chipset double-click on it and choose Driver > Roll Back Driver. This should revert to the standard Microsoft driver that came with Service Pack 2. Combine this with increasing your AGP aperture driver in the BIOS – look around in the 'Advanced Settings' section, and try setting it to 128 or 256 – and you stand a chance of improving system stability.

If you're getting a 'Fatal SCAR error' message than things are less clear; despite the exciting implications of tetanus the error actually refers to a problem in the game engine. For that, you'll have to wait for a patch.

Perhaps they're getting a bit tired of the ceaseless inter-species conflict.

UTILITY OF THE MONTH

SYSTEM FILE CHECKER

This is a really handy little tool for checking and repairing your precious Windows system files. And you don't have to bother installing it from anywhere either – it's already included with Windows XP. You can bring it out whenever you've got problems with damaged system files, be it from a botched installation or malware. Go to Start > Run and type 'cmd' to bring up the command prompt, and then type 'sfc /scannow'. It'll inspect all your protected system files and replace any that are damaged – have your Windows XP CD to hand so it can copy them over.

DO IT... THIS MONTH!

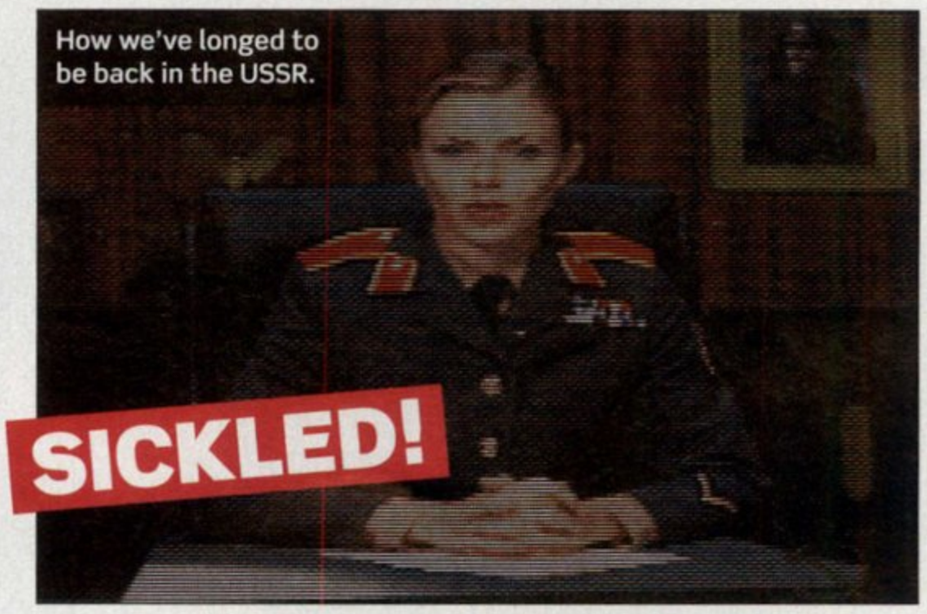
Run Red Alert in Windows XP

COMPATIBILITY

PROBLEM Classics such as *Red Alert* don't work properly in Windows XP
REMEDY Install correct network support and use Compatibility Mode
RESULT Lovely lo-res gaming is with us again

Windows XP might be a jolly swanky OS when it comes to running the latest games, but it does tend to fall down a bit when confronted with older stuff still available on budget, such as *Red Alert*. Handily, there are a few workarounds built in. If you browse through Program Files and find the game's .EXE file, right-click on it and choose Properties. Click the Compatibility tab, check 'Run this program in compatibility mode' and choose a suitable entry from the drop-down list: Windows 95 is usually the best bet. If it still doesn't work, try checking the other options to run it in only 256 colours, VGA resolution, or without visual themes.

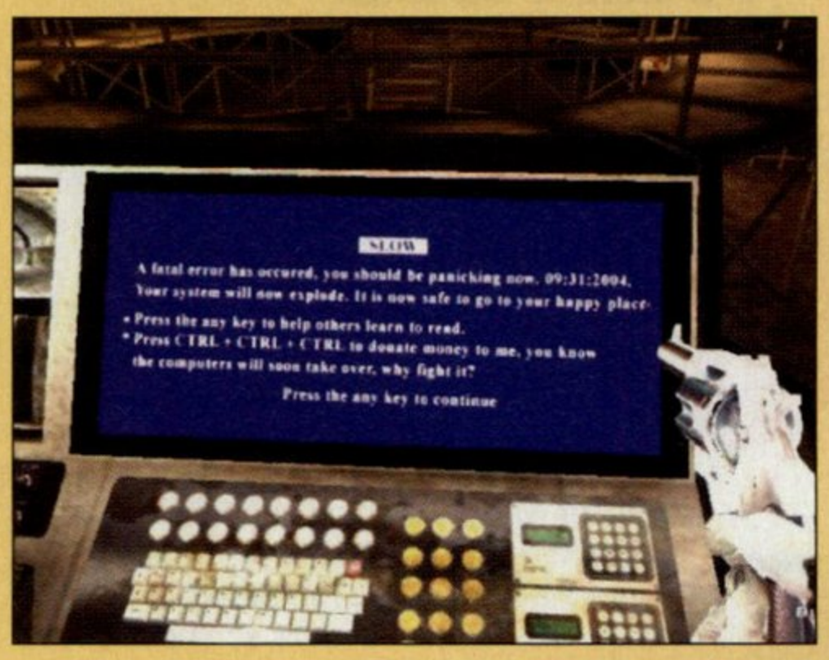
Once you've got it running, you're likely to hit problems with the multiplayer, due to it using the aged IPX protocol, which isn't installed by default. Go to Control Panel > Network Connections, right-click on your connection and choose Properties. In the box that appears, choose Install > Protocol > Add and select the IPX/SPX entry from the list. Click OK and it'll be added to the list in the Local Area Network Properties. Double-click it and set Frame Type to Ethernet 802.3 and Network Number to 00000002, then click OK and restart. When you launch *Red Alert*, go to Network Options > IPX Options and set the network card to the one beginning 0000002. Repeat for all other PCs you want to play against, and the brotherhood of Nod will ride again. Final tip: all the patches for old *C&C* games are still available from **ftp.westwood.com/pub**.



How we've longed to be back in the USSR.

Essential Tech Tips

TECH SUBJECT
BSOD due to 6800GT?


A fatal error has occured, you should be panicking now. 09:31:2004.
Your system will now explode. It is now safe to go to your happy place.
• Press the any key to help others learn to read.
• Press CTRL + CTRL + CTRL to donate money to me, you know the computers will soon take over, why fight it?
Press the any key to continue

An issue that many Nvidia 6800GT video card owners (as well as users of other current high-end models) are currently facing is repeated BSOD (Blue Screen of Death) errors when attempting to load graphically intensive applications such as games. For the unaware, a BSOD is a blue full-screen fatal system error that appears when Windows simply gives up on performing any further tasks. Although many factors can cause it (a highly overclocked system, unreasonably low memory timings, heat, etc), often the least suspected culprit is your power supply unit (PSU). If you're currently experiencing similar issues, below are a few steps you should take in order to remedy them.

1. The first step is to determine the wattage of your PSU, which can be done by opening up your PC chassis and physically reading the label. Since most users are happy to stick with the PSU they purchased way back with their first PC, chances are that its low wattage specification won't meet the huge power demands of current hardware, resulting in BSODs whenever your 6800GT attempts to draw further power.

2. Compare this wattage specification with the hardware you've got installed in your machine. For example, a system running a SATA drive, two optical drives, an Athlon 64 3400+, three case fans, a SoundBlaster Audigy, and a 6800GT will have significant issues drawing enough juice from a 300watt power supply. .

3. If you feel that the components in your PC are fairly matched with your power supply wattage, yet you're still experiencing BSOD errors, your PSU may be faulty. A simple way to check this is by examining your voltage rails using a freeware program such as Everest **(www.raxco.co.uk/product.asp?ProductID=119)**. The voltage readings from each rail should be on par with the specification of the rail itself. For example, the readings from the +3.3V rail should be almost 3.3V to the tee. If there are any significant variations, chances are you've got a faulty PSU.

4. Either way, an almost sure solution to this problem is to purchase a new PSU, preferably one that's at least 400W and a well-known brand. One model we highly recommend is the Antec TruePower 430W that can be purchased for around $130 from most retailers.

5. When installing your new unit, be sure to note exactly which components are connected to the PSU before you uninstall your old one, to ensure that it's all receiving power when you switch your machine back on.

DO IT... THIS WEEKEND!

TWEAKERY

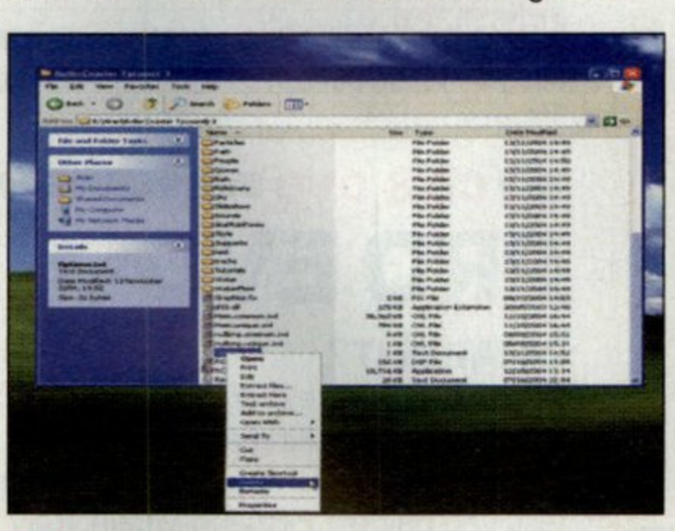
PROBLEM *RCT3* **weighs heavy on older systems**
REMEDY Disable the more advanced sound and graphics features
RESULT A gaming speed that's more appropriately rollercoaster-like

Get a smoother RTC3 ride

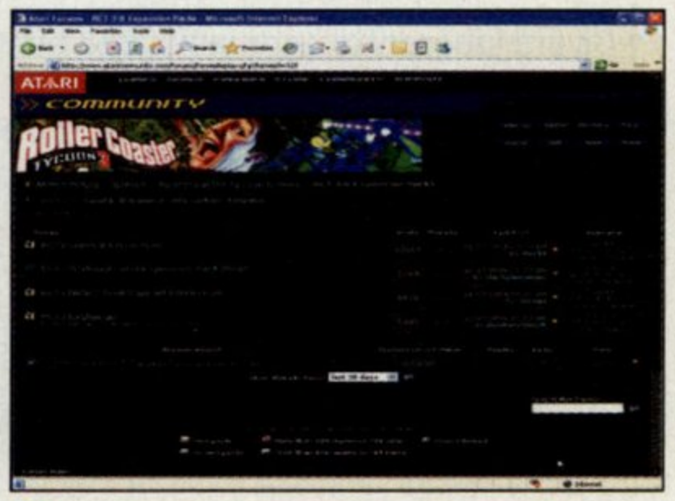
Rollercoaster Tycoon 3 has proved a rollercoaster ride in more ways than one, with plenty of moaning on the support forums. If the screen just goes black and dumps you to desktop, then it's likely to be a disc checking error; the only solution at present is to get a no-cd crack – but you didn't hear that from us, oh no. You may encounter a sluggish framerate if you've got an older graphics card; if that's the case then the boffins at Frontier recommend disabling bloom, shadows, anti-aliasing and reflective water, and turning on 'Simple Landscape Textures'. If that gets things running at Niagra speeds, start switching them back on one by one until you've got something that looks and plays satisfactorily.

1 Your soundcard may be passing work on to your CPU. Go to C:\Documents and Settings\[login name]\Application Data\Atari\RCT3, open options.txt and set MaxSound and MaxMusic to 25 and 2.

2 Soundblaster Live! cards can dump unnecessary load on your CPU too. Open up the EAX Control Panel in your Creative install directory and select the 'No effects' option to reduce this.



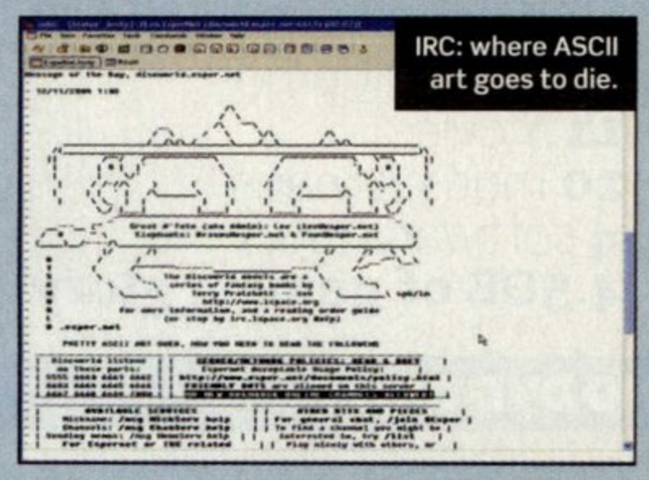
3 You may have set the screen resolution so high you can't view it on your monitor. Go to C:\Documents and Settings\[login name]\Application Data\Atari\RCT3 and delete options.txt.



4 Flickering lights, deeply erratic queue lines or more than averagely unintelligent punters? The first patch should sort you out. The beta is already available from www.atari-community.com.

TOO EMBARRASSED TO ASK...

"WHAT IS... IRC?"


IRC: where ASCII art goes to die.

The granddaddy of chat applications, Internet Relay Chat has been around for years and spawned more terrible gaming in-jokes than we'd care to recall. It works through an interconnected network of servers and functions essentially as a series of chat rooms, which are called channels and identified by the # symbol in front of their name - some of our forumites hang out at #pcgamer on the GameSurge server, for example. Joining in is just a case of getting an IRC client - mIRC is pretty good, and a free trial can be had from **www.mirc.com**. Pick a server and hop on a channel that sounds interesting, although as with most online communities you shouldn't expect everybody you meet to be *entirely* normal. Or the age they claim to be. Or the gender they say they are. Now you may begin to realise why it's a source of so much ribaldry.

ON THE DISCS

Featuring

- **13** playable demos
- **18** massive mods
- **14** must-see movies
- **30** system-boosting tools and utilities
- **Over 5Gb of goodies!**

THE PCGA PROMISE

- We pack every disc with the best new PC entertainment every month. If you can't find an item you were expecting, it probably just missed our deadline and you can bet we'll have it on next issue's disc.
- **PCs are inherently unreliable. Sad but true. So if something on your disc doesn't work then we'll help sort it out. See our Troubleshooter guide over the page to see what help we can offer.**
- We scour the earth to bring you the finest playable demos, movies, mods and utilities that PC gaming can provide. But if we miss a trick then tell our Disc Editor all about it. Email **dan@derwenthoward.com.au**

DVD vs CD

1 DVD **6.12 CDS!**

The world is moving on and CDs can't keep up. Demos, movies and mods are bigger than ever and, inevitably, we can't fit everything on the ancient storage medium.

This issue, DVD-drive owners get an extra:

+ 9 playable demos
+ 11 movies
+ 10 mods & maps
+ 4 software tools
= 4.5GB of gaming glory!

NO DVD DRIVE?

- New games these days are becoming huge, and DVDs are the only only practical way to store some of these games. You'll NEED one.
- **Get a DVD drive. There's one for only $70 or so at a hardware vendor near you.**

CD & DVD

CHILDREN OF THE NILE

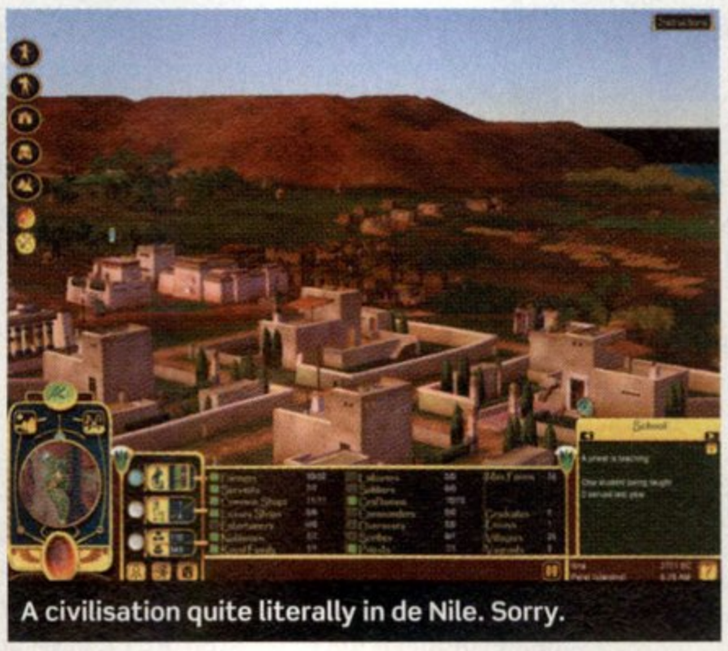
WHAT IS IT?

An absorbing city-building sim, from the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar*. Spend hours balancing the twin demands of a prosperous economy and building over-sized monuments to your own glory.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Educate three peasants from the underclass.

DEMO GOALS

Manage two primitive colonies through the transition from muck-racking subsistence economies to thriving towns.


A civilisation quite literally in de Nile. Sorry.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

›Egypt's entire economy is based on mud. The wealth of your world depends on the regular flooding of the Nile plains. Each planting season, the peasants will rush to use the fertile soils to plant crops.

›Produce must then be pooled in a 'threshing area', from which the pharaohs and nobles take their fare share, alongside the farmers. Lettuces, pomegranates and flax can then be used to barter with local shopkeepers, for luxuries like baskets and sandals.

›Every member of the family has a role to fulfil. While a farmer and his son head out to the fields to harvest, the mother is sent into the town to barter any leftover onions. Make sure everyone is doing their bit.

›It's fine for your peasants to live in mud huts, but that's no way to treat your educated nobles and workers. Place brickmakers near supplies of clay and flax, and bricklayers near where you're expanding your city.

README

Developer Tilted Mill Entertainment
Publisher Sega **Requires** 800MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Left Mouse Button** select ■ **Right Mouse Button** clear selection/rotate ■ **Mousewheel** zoom ■ **Middle Mouse button** shift viewpoint ■ **F1** open help index ■ **Home** return camera to default ■ **P** pause

CD & DVD

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

WHAT IS IT?

The most fluid, responsive, accurate simulation of kicking a pig's bladder around a field you can play. This demo lets you pair off England, Spain, Italy and Sweden for a half-a-match friendly. Marvel at the glorious player animations, and the miraculous way the ball reacts to passes and punts.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Gain a three goal lead over any team in any game.

DEMO GOALS

Score them.

We're still waiting for decent Toilet Roll Physics.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

›Before you even begin the game, configure your joypad to something approximating the PlayStation controls. *PES* began its life on the console, and it's yet to shake off its hangover.

›*PES* requires more than simply sprinting down the wing and booting the ball into the penalty area with the expectation that a striker is going to latch on to it. Sustained pressure is usually rewarded, so take your time, pass the ball around, probe for weaknesses.

›The longer you hold down the 'shoot' button, the higher the ball will fly. Shots from outside the box are likely to head over the bar. When you're in position, don't panic. Take a breath and gently squeeze the shoot button.

›The PC conversion allows you to whack the resolution up to 1600x1200, if your PC can handle it. That actually helps in your game, allowing you to distinguish between the talent on the pitch.

README

Developer In-house
Publisher Konami **Requires** 800MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **D-Pad** movement ■ **D** long pass ■ **X** short pass ■ **W** through pass ■ **A** shoot ■ **Q** cursor change ■ **E** dash ■ **Z** strategy ■ **C** special controls ■ **Spacebar** pause ■ **F1** help

CD & DVD

HALF-LIFE 2 MINI-MODS

WHAT IS IT?

The first batch of mods and tweaks to have emerged from the *Half-Life 2* community. There's an explosive-barrel launcher mounted on the buggy, a bullet-time mutator, a key to set anyone or any object on fire, tweaks to the weapon balance, and the superb 'Freeman's Roughnecks', your very own ant lion swarm. These mods fundamentally change the game, so we thoroughly recommend that you don't even think about installing them until you've completed the main campaign.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

›While the Source engine is endlessly configurable, actually installing the mods, and getting them running, is a little fiddly. Detailed instructions for each mod can be found in both the installers, the included readmes, and in the disc interface descriptions. The following instructions are written for the bullet-time mutator, but they should apply across the entire range of mods.

›Click on the link from the disc to open each installer, then direct the program to your *Half-Life 2* install. The bullet-time mutator is a .cfg file, and should be copied to the cfg directory. The path is typically c:\program files\valve\steam\steamapps\your name here\hl2.

›Start *Half-Life 2* normally, then, click on 'options'. Select the Keyboard tab, then 'advanced options'. Place a tick in the 'show developer console' box.

›Start a new game, or load any of your save games. When you're ready, press the tilde key (top left hand side of the keyboard, just under Escape) and type 'exec bullettime.cfg'. Press the tilde key again.

›The bullet-time mutator is up and running. Just hold down 'B' to wallow in slow motion gun play. For best effect, hit the button after shooting an explosive barrel a couple of times. Take one step back as it begins to burn, and watch the sparks fly.

Gosh, you can barely see him move, it's that slow.

README

Developer Various
Requires *Half-Life 2*

CD & DVD

BLOODRAYNE 2

WHAT IS IT?

A claret-drenched action adventure with slightly sapphic overtones. Ms Rayne has deadly blades, vampire powers, and the dress sense of a Parisian street-harlot.

DEMO GOALS

Infiltrate a party of the rich and connected, searching for clues to your mysterious past. While you're there, enjoy the ragdoll physics and pleasingly destructible scenery.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Make it to the first checkpoint without biting a single zombie.

We've no idea why Tony likes this game so much.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

›Rayne's basic attack, the blade slash, can be chained together in groups of threes. Tap the left mouse button, and she'll swipe while moving forward. Finish with a kick to floor your opponents.

›While they're on the floor, you can disarm them. Literally. Hammer the left mouse button, and Rayne will separating a limb from the body, unleashing a fountain of scarlet fluid.

›Your enemies are walking health pickups. When one is nearby, press 'E' and Rayne will leap up and begin draining their neck. Pressing the left mouse button while she's mounted will let her refill her 'rage meter', by thrusting her daggers into the victim's heart.

›Rayne's harpoon isn't just useful for knocking zombies back. When you've skewered your nearest opponent, hold down a direction key, and press the fire button. With a flick of the wrist, they'll be launched sideways, crashing into fireplaces, on spikes... Your call.

README

Developer Terminal Reality
Publisher Majesco **Requires** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **W, A, S, D** movement ■ **F** kick ■ **1** blood rage ■ **2** aura vision ■ **3** dilated perception ■ **4** stop powers ■ **Ctrl** lock on ■ **E** bite/harpoon ■ **Spacebar** jump

DISC EXTRAS

More than just demos...

+24 mods & maps

We hoover up the first *Half-Life 2* mini mods and throw them your way along with a splattering of *Morrowind* armour modules.

DOOM 3 - Gravgun 2: Two can play at that game.

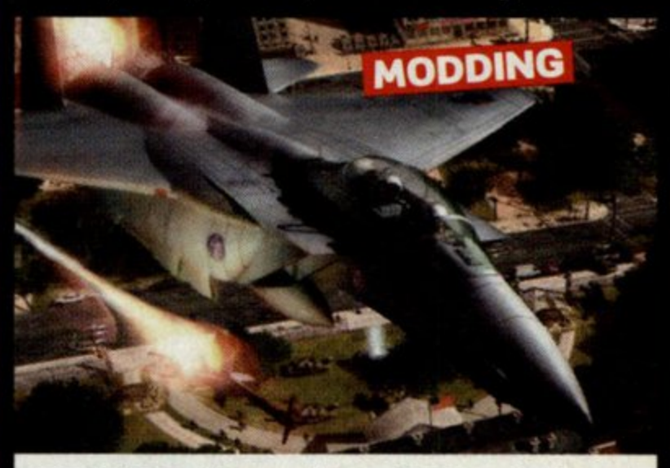
+12 movies

The best from the machinima scene, including Strangerhood, plus gaming trailers from *Dragonshard*, *Act of War* and more!

BOILING POINT: Bubbling away nicely.

+7 Galleries

Screenshots of some of recent and upcoming releases: *Cold Fear, Act of War, Battlefield 2, Stolen, Chaos Theory*, more!



ACT OF WAR: The next king of RTS gaming?

+Patches

› The largest and latest fixes for you: *Armies of Exigo, Pacific Fighters, Vampire: Bloodlines, Shadow Ops.*

+Extra features

› RESCOURCES - This issue we've put a collection of extended interviews. Expect to see more extra content on the cover discs in future, from interviews, through to guides and all manner of stuff not included in the magazine pages.

› SHAREWARE DEMOS – Five 'filettes' that make surprisingly good games.

See the back of your box for full disc contents.

NEXT ISSUE OF PC GAMES ADDICT ON SALE MAR 9

"C&C OR CNN?"

ACT OF WAR TO CHANGE RTS AS WE KNOW IT!

All magazine contents and gifts subject to change. Some gifts not available overseas.

REVIEWS
Act of War
KOTOR 2: The Sith Lords
Chaos Theory

PREVIEWS
Age of Empires 3
Battlefield 2
Dragonshard
SWAT 4

DEMOS
LotR: Battle for Middle-Earth
Darwinia
Act of War

MORE!
The PCGA 2004 Reader Awards
Sid Meier Interview and signed goodies

AGE OF EMPIRES 3 HUGE REPORT!
Can Microsoft's epic RTS series deliver again?

BATTLEFIELD 2 INCOMING!
Will Dice maintain their grip on team FPS?

The Performance Leader

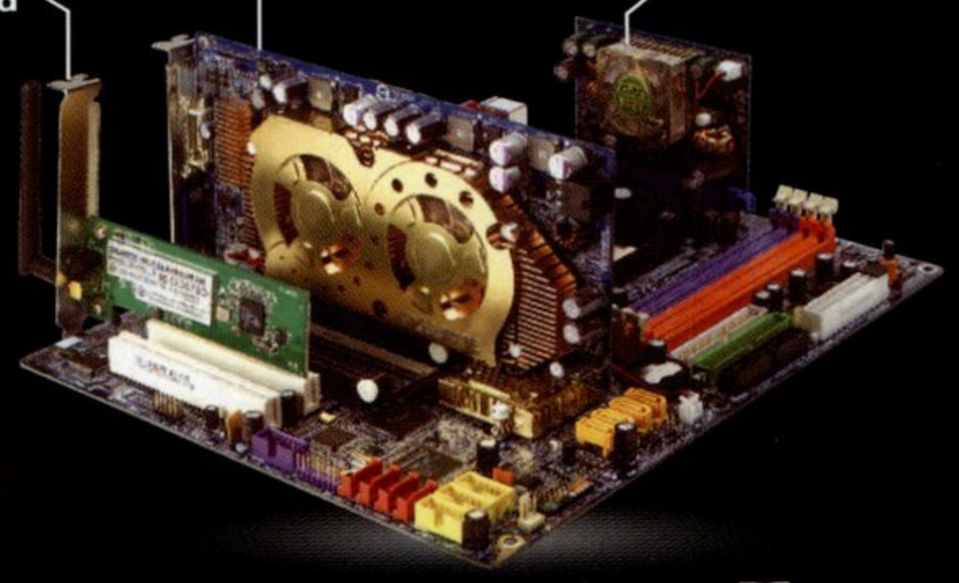
The World's First Dual 6600GT GPU Graphics Accelerator + K8NXP-SLI 8 SIGMA Motherboard

3D1 Graphics Accelerator + ***K8NXP-SLI*** Motherboard

GV-3D1
Dual 6600GT
Graphics Accelerator

GN-WPKG
WLAN Card

D.P.S. K8
Dual Power System



GA-K8NXP-SLI
NVIDIA nForce4 SLI Chipset
8 SIGMA Series Motherboard
Supports Socket 939 Athlon64 FX/Athlon64 processor

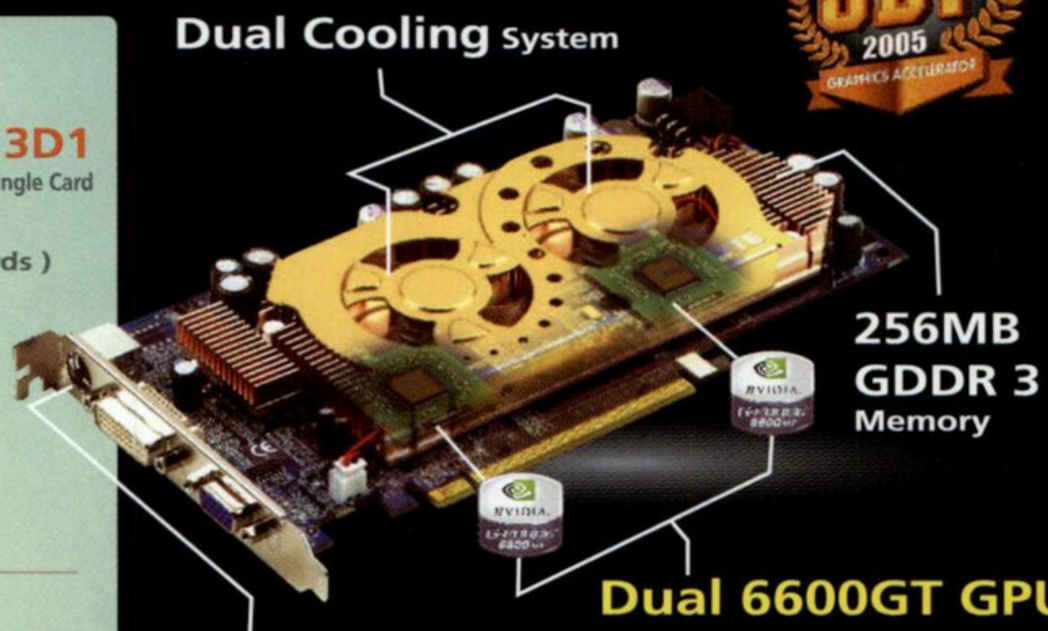
GV-3D1 Dual 6600GT Graphics Accelerator

3DMark 2003

14,293	**GIGABYTE 3D1** Dual 6600GT GPUs On Single Card
13,540	NVIDIA 6600GT SLI (2 Cards)
13,271	ATI X850XT Platinum
12,680	NVIDIA 6800 Ultra
8,240	NVIDIA 6600 GT

Results based on GIGABYTE's internal lab testing

Testing Configuration :
AMD Athlon 64 3000+ processor, GBT GA-K8NXP-SLI motherboard, 512MB DDR400, SATA 72000RPM HDD, Windows XP, 3DMark 2003 ver. 3.4, NVIDIA driver ver. 71.24, ATI driver ver. 8.082



NOTE: 3D1 is compatible with the GIGABYTE GA-K8NXP-SLI motherboard ONLY.

For more information, please call our distributors:

Australia

N.S.W.	SYNNEX	02-8748-9800
	RECTRON	02-9748-7725
QUEENSLAND	SYNNEX	07-3902-6300
PERTH	SYNNEX	08-9204-5700
VICTORIA	YNNEX	1300-880-038 (TOLL-FREE)
	RECTRON	03-9561-6166

New Zealand

Black Diamond Technology Limited	64-4-560-9100
Checksun New Zealand Limited	64-9-579-8832
Ingram Mirco NZ LTD	64-9-574-2500

Specifications and pictures are subject to change without notice.
All brand names and products are registered trademarks of their respective companies.

Upgrade Your Life™ www.gigabyte.com.tw

GIGABYTE™ TECHNOLOGY

Be Kind...

Don't tell them about our new power supplies

They've had over two years and still haven't matched Antec's TruePower, the best-selling and most awarded power supply line ever. And now we're shipping our all new Neo480—the ultimate power supply for gamers and other high performance users—and Phantom350, the unique fanless power supply that is totally silent. All backed by our peerless AQ3 three year warranty. For complete information you can go to www.antec.com. But please, don't tell them. It would be cruel.

Antec
The Power of You

ALTECH computers

BRW. Inside Business
6th fastest growing company in Australia in 2004

www.altech.com.au

Australia / NZ Exclusive Distributor:

Sydney
Unit 37, Slough Business Park
Holker St, Silverwater, NSW 2128
Tel: (02) 9735 5655
Fax: (02) 9735 5656
sales-syd@altech.com.au
www.altech.com.au

Melbourne
Building 3, 13-15 Brough st,
Springvale VIC 3171
Tel: (03) 9558 5090
Fax: (03) 9558 5091
sales-mel@altech.com.au
www.altech.com.au

Brisbane
64 Hope St,
South Brisbane, QLD 4101
Tel: (07) 3017 2000
Fax: (07) 3017 2020
sales-bne@altech.com.au
www.altech.com.au

Sub-Distributors:

SA Leader Computer Systems (08) 8112 6000 www.leadersystems.com.au

NT Ikon Systems (08) 8985 6233 sales@ikonsystems.com.au

NZ Geeks Direct +64 9 2777 815 www.geeksdirect.co.nz

Premium Resellers:

NSW	AusPCMarket		www.auspcmarket.com.au
	ARC Computers	(02) 9748 8322	www.arc.com.au
	Plus Corp	(02) 9898 3600	www.pluscorp.com.au
VIC	Scorpion Technology	(03) 9561 8088	www.scorptec.com.au
	CPL	(03) 8542 8688	www.cpl.net.au
QLD	GameDude	(07) 3387 1500	www.gamedude.com.au
	Umart Online	(07) 3369 3928	www.umart.com.au
TAS	Tasmanian Principal Comp.	(03) 6234 5677	www.tasmanianpc.com.au
WA	Austin Computers	(08) 9201 2788	www.austin.net.au
	Simline Solutions	(08) 9446 3423	www.simline.com.au
SA	Leader Computer Systems	(08) 8112 6000	www.leadersystems.com.au
	Getright Computers	(08) 8231 0622	www.getright.com.au